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THE ADVENTURE OF THE MISPLACED HOUND

By Poul Anderson & Gordon R. Dickson

ASIMOV — DE CAMP — BINDER — POWERS — WALLACE — SMITH

PERPETUAL MOTION

THIS is the third issue of UNIVERSE. Our new magazine is moving right along. Already it has acquired two new editors and a new publisher! And by way of introduction . . .

We have a feeling you will be mighty surprised to see the names at the bottom of this editorial. But perhaps they can be best explained by quoting an author friend of ours from out Colorado way, one of the real old-timers of science fiction. Says Robert Moore Williams: "Whenever anything comes out of Chicago, I always suspect that Ray Palmer has a hand in it." Bob was wrong, but he gave us an idea, and we began to investigate. As publishers of SCIENCE STORIES, FATE and MYSTIC Magazine, we've been looking for a fourth to round out our little family. UNIVERSE appealed to us so much that we just had to own it — and now we do!

We only hope we can continue to do as good a job as George Bell did with the first two issues. This issue's stories are our first offering to you. If you like them, tell us about it. We've tried to keep up the pace of the original owners, and we hope to make it perpetual — and constantly accellerating.

Ray Palmer & Bea Mahaffey
Editors

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Universe
SCIENCE FICTION

Issue #3

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The HUNGRY HERCYNIAN

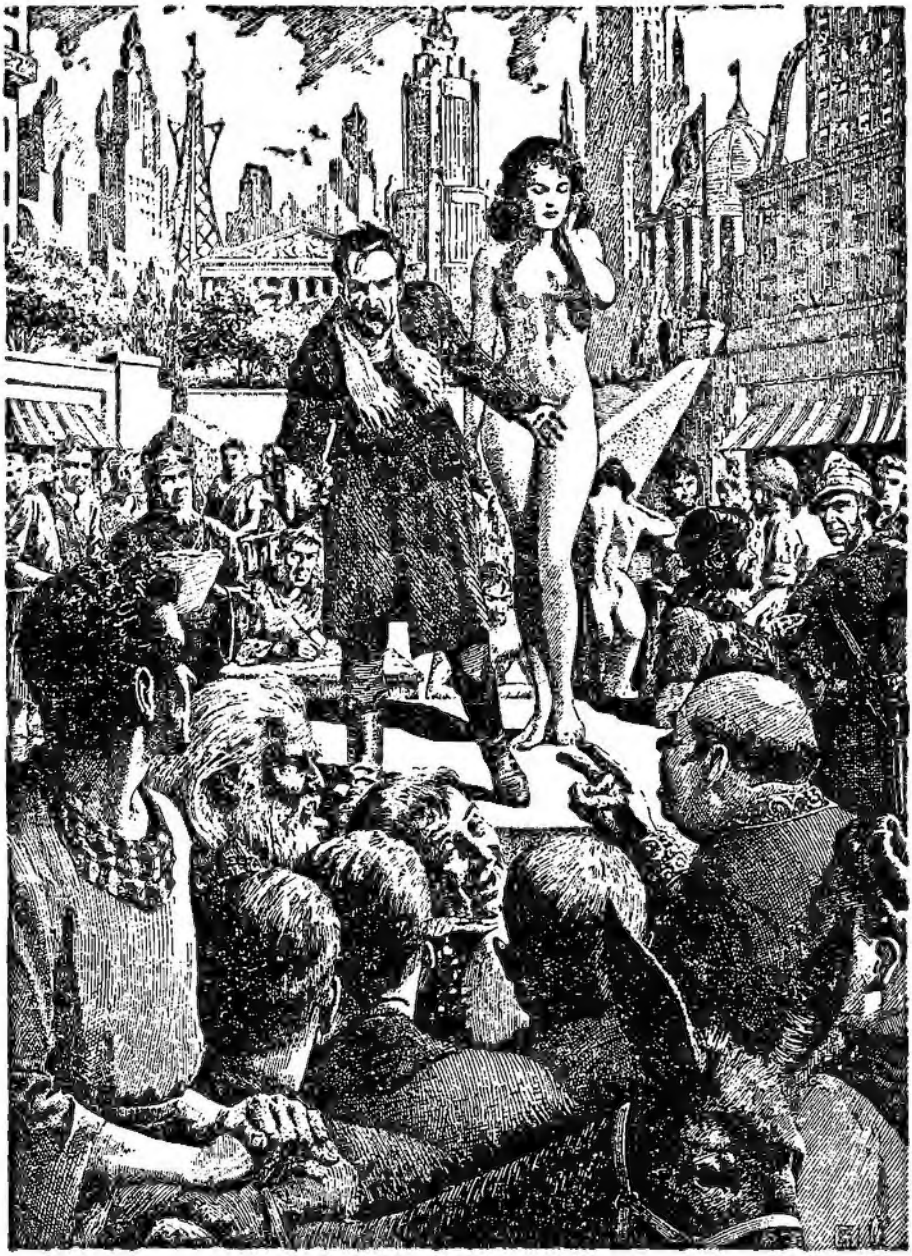
When a Hercynian gets hungry, not all the wizardry — or deceit — of science can prevail against so primitive an urge.

By

L. Sprague De Camp

Illustrated by Lawrence

Bokarri was the most powerful wizard of the mighty Tartessian Empire, and it was with confidence that he decided to match wits with Zyc, the Hercynian. After all, the Hercynians were only savages, and in fact, cannibals, the lowest form of savage. There would be no great wit necessary to best this primitive beast. But then, into the land of the Tartessians came a lad, and a girl. Fair to look upon was the girl, and manly was the lad — a combination that is bound to upset the plans of all those who base their designs on reason rather than emotion; and love is the most powerful moving force on earth, next to hunger!



Gezu felt in his wallet and gave up any thought of buying the girl.

KURTEVAN'S Tower stood in one of the oldest sections of Torrutseish, capital of the mighty Tartessian Empire, which ruled not only the Tartessians proper but also most of the other Euskerian nations like the Turdulians. The tapering cylinder of dark-red stone arose from inside a walled inclosure. As Lord Noish approached it, it looked black against the fading purple of the Euskerian spring sunset.

Parting the curtains of his litter to peer out at the Tower of Kurtevan, Lord Noish did not like its looks. He knew that the edifice was called Kurtevan's Tower after an eminent wizard who had lived and died before Noish's time. Legend said that Kurtevan had tried to get the better of the redoubtable Vakar of Lorsk, back in King Asizhen's reign, and had been burned up in his own lair as a result.

The gutted and fire-blackened shell had stood for generations, none daring to demolish or restore it for fear of the baleful influences that might linger on the spot, until a new tenant had quietly moved in and set about refurbishing the ruin. Nobody seemed to know about this newcomer, but one morning the inclosure rang with the sound of hammer and adze as carpenters trimmed new boards and beams. Noish had looked in at the office of the Registrar of Records and learned that the lot had been bought by one Zyc the Hercynian.

That was curious. Hercynians, Noish understood, were a cannibal race living far to the east, beyond the wild Kelts. If the Kelts were barbarians, the Hercynians were true savages. Noish had seen a couple brought to Torrutseish as slaves, but so wild, frightened, and stupid were they that they proved unsalable and were killed to save the cost of feeding them.

It was odd, then, that one of that race should accumulate enough trade-metal to buy a house and lot in teeming Torrutseish. The average Kelt, for instance, could not understand buying and selling and got insulted if one tried to treat commercially with him. Everything had to be an exchange of gifts. Hercynians probably understood nothing beyond

∴ the good old rule ∴ ∴ the simple plan,
That they should take, who have the power,
And they should keep who can.

Yet here was Noish, the richest lord of Turrutseish's second caste, jogging in his litter up to the gate in the brick wall surrounding this painted primitive's tower. Voices murmured in the dark, and Bokarri the wizard thrust his narrow, sallow face in at the curtains.

"Good my lord!" said Bokarri.

"They'll not admit us."

"What? Not admit *me?*"

"The ostiary says you may enter — but alone and on foot only."

Lord Noish heaved his bulk out of the litter. A big, fat, jolly-looking man, he waddled up to the gate.

Instead of the usual single peep-hole with a copper plate hung on a pin inside for a shutter, this gate had two, one at normal eye-level and one a couple of feet higher. The upper one was now open, as though the gatekeeper were standing on a box inside.

Noish stared up at the aperture, though the light was now too dim, even with the help of the lanthorns carried by his whifflers, to see anything of the face on the other side. He called:

"Varlet, know you who I am?"

"You are Lord Noish, are you not?" rumbled a strongly accented bass voice of startling profundity.

"And you say you'll admit me only alone and on foot?"

"That is right."

Noish ran a hand over his bald pate. If this had been just an ordinary citizen, a member of the fifth or sixth castes, Noish could and probably would have returned home, armed a few score servants and retainers, and come back to take the place by storm. But this was different. Although as a foreigner this Zyc would have only the most tenuous legal rights, and although Noish could probably override these by virtue of his wealth, power, and caste status, the catch was that he very much wanted a favor from Zyc, who would not comply with his request if his precincts were invaded by force.

Noish had summoned Bokarri, his regular magician, with a request for a spell to get rid of Noish's great rival for the favor of King Ikusiven of Tartessia, the chief minister Haldu. Bokarri had failed Noish, saying that such an operation was beyond the competence of a mere general practitioner like himself, and he must call in a specialist. Zyc was the specialist.

So, much as it went against his grain, Noish quickly made his decision. "Open, fellow," he said. "I accept your conditions."

Noish's head hamal started to protest at the rashness of Noish's entering these haunted grounds without his retinue, but Noish waved him to silence and walked in as the gate swung. Then he flinched as the light of the lanthorns fell upon the gatekeeper, a Laistrugonian eight feet tall with long black hair falling over his massive shoulders and a club in his hand that could have squashed Lord Noish like a bug.

The Laistrugon slammed the gate behind Noish and shot home the huge bolt. "This way, sir," he said.

The giant led the way to the base of the tower, opened the door, and let Noish in ahead of him with better manners than Noish would have expected of the savage. The ground floor of the Tower of Kurtevan was lit by one single lamp in a wall-bracket. Its flame fluttered in the draft caused by the closing of the front door. The ground floor, a single big circular room, seemed empty save for a few chests and pieces of furniture against the walls. The Laistrugonian led Noish across the great room to the circular stairway that spiraled up to the floor above.

On the second storey, Noish found Zyc the Hercynian sitting naked amid a heap of cushions on the floor, awaiting him as no doubt Kurtevan had awaited his clients years before. This room was lit by several lamps. Zyc was a dark stocky man with flattish features and wide cheek-bones that gave him a dish-faced look. His skin seemed to be a yellowish brown, though that was hard to ascertain because his face was covered with paint, the right half red and the left half white. His body was also covered with painted designs, and where paint was lacking the shaman's hide was clad in a liberal coating of dirt. He had had all the hair shaved from his head, and a glossy-black stubble was just growing back in. Around his neck hung a necklace of human remains: finger-bones, teeth, dried ears, and other parts, arranged in a neatly symmetrical pattern. Zyc was gnawing the meat from a bone (a joint of beef, Noish was relieved to observe) and other bones, picked more or less clean, lay about him on the floor. His movements were quick and sure as if he were bursting with animal vitality.

Noish approached, his nose becoming aware of a powerful stench of rotting fragments of food and unwashed man. "You are Zyc?" he said, mispronouncing the foreign sounds.

The shaman grunted an affirmative, then spoke with his mouth still full. "What you want?"

Noish drew a long breath to get his self-control. An ordinary Tartessian who used him with such insolence would soon have regretted it. He replied:

"Magic. I would destroy a man."

"How? What man?" said Zyc between chews.

Noish forced a grim smile. "You might offer me a seat, my good fellow."

Zyc said to the Laistrugon: "Kumo, give this man a cushion and go."

Noish took the cushion, plunked his massive rump down upon it, and continued: "Bokarri assures me your discretion is to be relied upon. Is that true?"

"Of course. What you think I

am?"

Noish deemed it better not to say what he thought Zyc was. He replied: "It had better be, my friend. If you know about me, you know I can pay back any betrayal."

Noish went on to explain about the minister Haldu. One by one the men who had stood between Noish and the highest post open to a second-caste Tartessian had been removed: one poisoned, another stabbed, a third sent abroad on a dangerous mission, a fourth frightened into retirement. But Lord Haldu, the shrewd and energetic chief minister, still sat in his seat of honor. He showed no sign of losing his grip with age, of perishing from a pox, or of falling out with King Ikusiven. The time had come, therefore, to remove him, but in such a manner that the beneficiary of his fall, Lord Noish, should not be suspected.

"I could not," said Noish, "simply invite him to dinner and poison him. For one thing he brings his own taster; for another, I should too obviously benefit by being next in line for the ministry."

Zyc finally tossed his bone aside, wiped his mouth on the back of his hand, and spat on the floor. "What sort of man, this king?" he asked.

Noish shrugged. "A man like other men, for all the supposed divinity of the first caste. He tries to live up to what he supposes to be his proper rôle without sufficient intelligence to do so with effect."

Zyc thoughtfully sucked the meat-juice off his fingers. "Very dignified man? Particular about — you know — what you call — formalities?"

"Oh, very. It's as much as your life is worth to take any liberties with him."

"What happen if Lord Haldu went to king and told him plain truth about himself?"

Noish chuckled. "I see whither blows the breeze. That would be the end of Lord Haldu — at least of his ministry, and probably of him as well. But how would you force Haldu into so rash a course? Any public man knows that, as says the philosopher Goishek, truth is too precious commodity to be used without discrimination."

Zyc belched. "We see. Can you get Haldu and king to your house and drug Haldu's wine?"

"Aye, that I can. I'll give a feast, and while the king's caste rules forbid his eating with us of the second caste, there's nought to stop him from coming to enjoy the entertainment afterwards. And then I suppose Haldu, full of your truth-drug, will tell the king what a sorry little twerp the fellow is. But stay: the same physic would have affected Haldu's taster, thereby

betraying our part in the coil."

"Think not. Taster simple slave. Nobody notice whether he tell truth or not."

"Excellent, my good savage; most sapiently thought out. But ere we plunge further into this plotsome thicket, what will be your scot?"

"Ha ha!" Zyc gave a barking laugh, showing all his teeth, and spat again. "Plenty."

"I can pay any reasonable weight of trade-metal."

"Don't want trade-metal," snarled the Hercynian. "Have enough."

"What then?"

"Want young girl, not over eighteen, and plump."

"Oh, you mean a slave?" Noish paused in wary puzzlement. "Why can't you take the trade-metal and buy your own?"

"I no buy slave. You buy, bring secretly to me. If I buy, people see me, know I buy. Slave disappear, police come looking."

"Oh." A horrid suspicion formed in Noish's mind. "You, then wish this maid not for the usual purposes, but to . . ."

"Aye, ha ha! You Tartessians funny people. Let master kill slave, but don't let him do what he like with body."

"We regard cannibalism as immoral," said Noish, drawing his black Euskerian cloak virtuously about him. "Though to speak the truth, the more important reason in the minds of my countrymen is a superstitious fear of the ghosts of persons not properly buried. But look here, my man, even with my power I cannot afford to be involved in such an outrage —"

"No girl, no truth-drug," said Zyc. "Me and Kumo haven't had *good* meal since we came to Torrutseish. You fetch girl; you protect me afterwards if anybody ask questions. I give you magical truth-drug; you become minister. You say nothing; I say nothing."

Again Noish made his decision, though not without some small shudder. "Very well. Give me the drug, and when I'm minister you shall have the wench."

"Ha! Me stupid? Girl first, then drug."

There ensued a long argument Finally they agreed that Noish should buy the girl immediately but hold her for delivery until after the drug had done its work. He added:

"Must she be a virgin?"

Zyc flashed his teeth. "Nay. Virgins, not-virgins, all taste same."

Gezun Lorska, or Gezun of Gadaira as he now called himself, jogged on his mule Dostæn up the road along the south shore of the broad Baitis. As he made a turn he came in sight of Torrutseish on the island made by the forking and rejoining of the river. The world's largest city was sur-

rounded by a great circular wall of red, white, and black stone, arranged in a brilliant mosaic pattern, and behind the wall rose tall towers of similar construction. The bright Euskerian spring sun blazed on the gilding of spires and tourelles and on the streaming flags bearing the owl of Tartessia.

Gezun was a native of the sinking continent of Pusâd or Poseidonis across the Sirenian Sea, who at the age of twelve had been kidnapped by slavers and sold in Gadaira. His master, the wizard Sancheth Sar, had died the previous year, freeing Gezun and leaving him half his collections of magical books and paraphernalia. But the heir to the other half, a nephew of Sancheth, swindled Gezun out of all the more important items.

The rest had gone in the course of Gezun's tyronic attempt to set himself up as a master magician in Gadaira. Some had been stolen, some destroyed, and some lost in a game with his chief rival, the wizard Nikurteu. Gezun's only remaining magical prop was a ring of star-metal that protected the wearer against charms. Sancheth had told him that there were less than a score of these in existence, mostly in the hands of kings and leading magicians.

Then Gezun learned that he had gotten the daughter of his neighbor, the merchant Berota, with child. Gezun and Jarra had been carrying on for some time and Gezun would gladly have wedded her. But Berota had different plans for his daughter, which did not include marriage to an unsuccessful and debt-ridden young magician and a foreign-born freedman at that.

Learning that Berota had hired the town's leading bullies to kill him, Gezun had thrown his remaining possessions into a pair of saddle-bags, turned loose his collection of pets, and ridden off into the night. He had jogged a hundred and sixty miles up the Baitis, and now neared the imperial capital itself.

Like most Lorskans he was big — at seventeen he towered over the Euskerians — with a swarthy skin and thick curly black hair. While Sancheth was alive Gezun had entertained notions of riding up to Torrutseish and winning the daughter of the king in some heroic contest. Now he knew that while King Ikusiven did indeed have a daughter, the daughter had three lovers and a mustache, and moreover in the rigid stratification of Tartessian society his chances of meeting this dubious prize were nil.

Passage by ferry-raft across the south arm of the Baitis cost Gezun one of his few remaining pieces of trade-metal, a miniature copper ax-head bearing the cartouche of King Ikusiven.

Downstream from where the

rope that guided the ferry was belayed to a big old cork oak near the water's edge, the shoreline had been revetted into a series of docks and quays, in some of which ships were drawn up. One of these ships had just pulled in: a long low galley with the orca-symbol of the far-northern isle of Foworia upon its sail. A load of slaves had been herded off and now were being marched up towards the city by a gang of beetle-browed, piratical-looking sea-rovers.

The head of the procession reached the south gate before Gezun, who had to sit slouched on Dostæn, sympathetically watching the captives shamble past with downcast eyes and blank faces, until they had all entered. One in particular caught his eye: a young woman in the remains of a Hesperian dress; young, dark, and with beautifully molded contours and a proud carriage. She cast him a noncommittal glance and passed on, but Gezun tingled as their eyes met.

Gezun felt in his wallet and gave up any thought of buying the girl. Still, curious about her fate, he followed the sad procession into the city. At least he might learn what happened to her. Then, when he had established himself, who knew?

The slave-procession marched a few hundred paces and then debouched into a great agora that included the official slave-mart. The Foworians kicked and beat their way through the swarm of beggars, hucksters, pimps, and plain citizens to the cleared inclosure containing the slave-block, the officials who conducted the business, and a couple of King Ikusiven's slingers strolling about to see that unauthorized persons stayed out of the area.

Lolling on his mule, Gezun could easily see over the heads of the crowd into the inclosure. At the moment a pair of tall reddish-blond Atlanteans were up for sale. They did not bring much, for the Torrutseishans too well knew the intractable natures of these fierce mountaineers. The pair were finally knocked down to a contractor for the royal silver-mines in the country of the Turdetanians. The Atlanteans put back on their buckskin kilts and their vermillion-dyed goatskin mantles and were led off to the short and brutish lives remaining to them.

Then came a batch of Gamphasants from Lake Kokutos, south of the mountains of Atlantis: tall thin dark-brown folk with curly black hair, offered by a group of Kerneans in fluttery jelabs and kafflyehs with rings in their ears. The Gamphasants did not have to strip because they wore no clothes to begin with. They were snapped up quickly, being known for their fatalistic docility and for the ease with

which they could be trained into good gardeners, stable-boys, and the like.

At last came the Foworians' captives, a miscellany from the western islands. Most were Hesperians, considered clever and courteous, but tricky and given to running away. They went, one by one, until the girl who had attracted Gezun's attention stood naked on the block.

She looked even better to Gezun than she had with her clothes on. His blood pulsed as he looked at her, but of course . . .

The bidding seemed brisker and more determined. It soon settled down into a contest between two men who leaned against the rope, glaring at each other as each capped the other's bid. One was a big stout bald man in the ornate garb of a Tartessian noble. Gezun could see his gilded litter lying on the fringe of the crowd, and the bearers leaning against it.

The other was also fat, but smaller, with a halo of silky-white hair and a long white beard which contrasted with the apparent youthfulness of his smooth pink skin. What interested Gezun more was the fact that the cloak in which he was wrapped was neither the somber black of Euskeria, nor the blue-and-white favored in the Hesperides, but bore the tartan pattern of Poseidonis.

"Twenty nasses," said the bald man.

"Twenty-two," said the white-haired bidder, in what sounded to the eager Gezun like a Lorskan accent.

"Twenty-five," said the bald one, and took a threatening step towards his rival. "Mark ye, churl! Know you not against whom you're bidding these unwonted sums?"

"I neither know nor care," said the beard. "Twenty-seven."

"For the last time, insolent knave, I warn you —"

"Sirs!" interjected the auctioneer. "For one bidder to threaten another is quite out of order, even for you, my lord Noish. I'll appeal to the minister —"

"The minister can go puke," said Noish. "I'll say what I please, and I warn this foreign filth —"

"Ha!" shouted the beard. "That for you!"

The men were too close together, and Gezun was too far, for him to see clearly what happened. However, he had an impression of a spurt of white powder, tossed by the bearded one at Lord Noish. The latter recoiled and began to cough. He coughed and coughed and coughed until he turned purple and tears ran down his cheeks. Every time he got his coughing under control he turned to the auctioneer to try to bid, and promptly went off into another spasm. At last he staggered to his litter, heaved himself

in, and was borne off to the laughter of the multitude.

"Now," said the bearded one, "I believe that my bid of twenty-seven nasses is the highest hitherto, and unless you hear another I shall forthwith take possession of my merchandise."

Presently the bearded man waddled off with his new slave. Gezun kicked Dostæn into motion and trotted after until he caught up with the man. He leaned over and said in Lorskan:

"Good-day, Grandfather. Come you from my parts?"

"I take it you're Lorskan, lad?" said the beard.

"Aye. My name was Döpueng Shysh, of the Amfandela clan. Here I go by Gezun of Gadaira, as I can't get Euskerian tongues to master Lorskan sounds, and I don't brag of my Lorskan origin because these haughty Euskerians think us all stupid."

"Say you so?" replied the oldster amiably. "I've known several men of that clan. Are you the son of that cousin of Squire Tr'nu, that was stolen by Aremorian pirates a few years back?"

"The same. And you, sir?"

"I am Derezong Tâsh of Mneset, sometime court wizard to King Vuar until in one of his fits of caprice he decided that my head would look better without a body attached."

"You're a great man, sir."

"Oh, not at all," said Derezong, grinning smugly nevertheless. "Merely a poor refugee like yourself. Are you a free man at present?"

"Yes," said Gezun, conscious of the slave-brand on his hand. "My master freed me in his will."

"Then why not return to Lorsk and your family?"

"I'd liefer return with fortune in hand, and meseems the Tartessian Empire offers wider opportunity. If you need an apprentice, I served the late Sancheth Sar, and so . . ."

"Thank you, but I have an apprentice already and cannot afford another," said Derezong. "Howsomever, if you've but now arrived in Torrutseish and have not yet found lodging, you may use my poor place until you do."

Gezun poured out thanks, as this was precisely what he had been angling for. All this time the Hesperian girl had trudged after Derezong without saying a word. Derezong turned to her and said in Lorskan:

"Now, my dear, tell us who *you* are."

She looked blank, as also when he repeated the question in Euskerian. When he finally asked it in bad Hesperian she brightened and said that she was Yorida, the daughter of a baker of Sederado in the island of Ogugia.

Derezong said to Gezun in Lorskan: "She'll make a fine concubine. In Mneset I had a most

admirable harem of fourteen lovely concubines as well as numerous children and grandchildren. But alas, as I had to quit the palace by lowering myself down the outer wall by a rope, my poor family had perforce to be abandoned. I only hope Vuar didn't slay the lot in pure spitefulness. Now that I begin to prosper once more, I've bought Yorida as the first step in collecting a new family. A wise proceeding, think you not?"

Gezun agreed with a forced smile, and they reached Derezong's house, a small crumbly affair wedged between two much larger ones.

"A hovel, I grant," said Derezong, "but another year will see us in a better, I hope. Enter."

The door was opened by another Lorskan, a hard-faced fellow of about thirty and bigger than Gezun.

"My apprentice, Zhamel Sê," said Derezong and introduced Gezun. Zhamel gave Gezun a scowl. Derezong asked Zhamel: "And what have you purchased for our dinner to-day?"

Gezun slipped out to find a stable where he could keep his mule. This took some time, and when he returned he found Derezong's front room empty except for Zhamel Sê, who was setting out drinking-vessels and a jug of wine. Zhamel set down the jug, looked at Gezun, pulled out a knife big enough to split kindling, and began trimming his fingernails with it.

"A fine bit of bronze," he said. "I keep it sharp in case some young springald should try to worm himself into my place with Derezong."

"I understand," said Gezun, wondering if there were not some way by which he could safely murder Zhamel.

Then Derezong came out leading Yorida in a servant's dress, which if less fancy than her ragged garb had originally been was at least new and clean. He dropped into the armchair and motioned for wine. When Zhamel had poured, Derezong raised his mug.

"To the windy plains of bison-swarming Lorsk!" he said. "Yorida looks more civilized now, does she not? Zhamel and I scrubbed her from top to toe. She bore such an accumulation of soil that you could almost have plowed it and raised a crop of barley thereon. Give the maid a drink too, Zhamel. You'll excuse this sour slop, Master Gezun, but I cannot yet afford the green wine of Zhysk . . ."

The oldster babbled on, and drank, and babbled some more. Gezun, trying to keep up with him, soon found his head spinning. Several wine cups later Zhamel and Yorida disappeared into the back room to cook dinner.

". . . these Euskerians eat at uncanny hours," said Derezong.

"Dinner in the dark of evening just before they go to bed. But my Lorskan stomach still insists upon its main meal by daylight. I wonder what detains those twain. Let's hope Zhamel casts not covetous eyes . . ."

Derezong heaved himself out of the armchair and toddled back out of sight. There were voices, and then Yorida appeared to pick up the empty mugs.

Gezun got up from his stool. He had had enough to drink to bring out his natural recklessness, though not enough to make him noticeably unsteady.

"Yorida!" he said.

"Sir?"

"Harken, you don't wish to bed with old whitebeard, do you?" he said in fluent if ungrammatical Hesperian, which he had learned as the language of commerce in all the coastal cities of the Sirenian Sea. "And scrub his floors and wash his shirts and haul water from the city wells?"

"Well, but what —"

"Come with me instead! I'm madly in love with you! I've burned for you ever since I saw you. We'll flee to the mountains and live as free lovers among the trees and flowers." He grabbed her wrist.

"But Master Gezun, I belong to him! I cannot —"

"Rubbish! The philosopher Goishek proves that every man's his own property. I'll show you life and love as they ought to be lived. Come on!"

Without waiting for further argument, Gezun caught up his saddle-bags and dragged Yorida out Derezong's front door, and then pell-mell along the street leading to the stable where Dostæn boarded.

"But my dinner!" wailed Yorida.

"What's food?" said Gezun. "I love you; what more do you want?"

Shortly afterward, Gezun's mule, restive under the double load, was trotting across the wooden bridge that spanned the shallow northern arm of the Baitis. He turned northeast towards the range of mountains that rose against the sky in olive-brown waves, sharply shadowed by the setting sun.

It was ten or twelve days later — Gezun, not good at keeping track of dates, was not sure which — when he went out to forage. He had learned in the course of his Arcadian holiday that Euskeria was remarkably lacking in edible wild plants. The only kind that he had found so far were chestnut trees, and they did not bear this early in the season. The sheep that he had stolen had enough meat on it still for a couple more meals, but it was getting decidedly high, and he did not dare steal another lest the local shepherds get suspicious and form a posse

to hunt him down.

Furthermore, Yorida's complaints about the discomfort of the cave and the precariousness of the food-supply had become steadily more strident. The meadows might be carpeted with a gorgeous array of wild-flowers glistening with the morning dew, but the sight no longer sent Gezun off into poetical raptures. In fact he looked upon them with dour resentment because they were inedible.

He had, however, achieved one triumph, in making a workable bow. This had proved a long and complicated process, requiring most of his time for several days. He had to find a yew-tree for the bowstave, and a lime-tree whose bark could be twisted into string, and a dead crow for feathering, and so on. As it was, he had no proper arrowheads and would have to rely on blunt-headed stunning-arrows, effective against birds and rabbits only, until he could grind down the bones of the sheep into piercing arrowheads.

He did not know if he could work up enough power to bring down a buck, or even a young aurochs, of which there was a herd in the neighborhood. But it might be worth trying provided that he were always near enough to a tree to climb if an aurochs charged him. He did not care to try to dodge one as Euskerian bull-fighters dodged bulls in the arena.

After half a day's stalking he brought down one rabbit. Coming back to his love-nest, it occurred to him to sneak up on the cave from above, spy on Yorida, and then jump out and surprise her.

He made a long detour to keep out of her sight; got lost and had to climb a hill to find himself again; and finally approached the cave from above. As he came out of a grove of pine that crested the hill he heard voices and looked down the slope to see a group of men leading off Yorida.

"*Hé!*" he shouted and ran down the hill, leaping from rock to rock.

The men looked around and there was a flash of bronze as weapons came out.

"Let her go!" yelled Gezun, stopping to string his bow and nock an arrow.

One man held a big shield of hide up in front of him while the others crowded behind him. Gezun let fly. The arrow, no masterpiece of the fletcher's art, wobbled and corkscrewed in flight, but by luck hit the shield and bounced off.

The men laughed as they saw what sort of arrow it was. Somebody called a command. Leaving one man to hold Yorida, the others — four of them — started for Gezun at a trot. Two had swords, one a hunting-spear, and Gezun could not see how the fourth man

was armed. He shot another arrow, hoping to hit one in the face, but the shot went wild and the men kept on.

Gezun, looking from one to the other, began backing up. Then as they neared, bronze rapiers ready, he turned and fled.

At least he could outrun them, being younger and longer of leg. He was speeding away from his pursuers when a distant cry from Yorida made him glance back:

"Gezun! Beware!"

The man whose weapon Gezun had not seen was whirling a sling. As Gezun looked, the slinger let fly. Gezun dropped flat on the ground, and the stone whizzed over him with lethal energy. He sprang up and ran on.

Before the slinger could wind up another missle Gezun was out of his range, running swiftly towards where he had staked out his mule. As he ran he wept, partly from bereavement and partly from the rage of humiliation.

Lord Noish looked out over his company, surveying the scene as if he were a general overlooking a battlefield and concealing his thoughts behind a bland smile. The lords sat in a horse-shoe, each on his silver-inlaid stool with the little table of mammoth-ivory and ebony in front of him. The servants had cleared away the viands and set out wine-cups into which they were pouring the green wine of Zhysk. As Girios, Noish's Hesperian head butler, approached the place at which sat Haldu the chief minister, he exchanged a quick look with his master.

Noish's smile broadened by the thickness of a hair, and he nodded ever so slightly. Girios poured wine into a new empty cup, though another cup, still half full, sat on the table before Lord Haldu. At Haldu's motion, the taster who crouched on the floor beside him took the newly-poured cup and drank a sip of it, then replaced it beside the old. By the time Haldu had drained the first cup the effect of the draft from the second, if any, would have manifested themselves upon the taster.

A trumpet blatted and a footman in the doorway cried: "The king!"

The Tartessian lords rose from their stools. As King Ikusiven appeared in the doorway, everybody in the room dropped to hands and knees and bent his head until his forehead touched the ground — even Lord Seindan, who had just finished vomiting into the vase that Noish had caused to be set out for those who drank too much.

"Rise, gentlemen," said the King, coming forward. His armed guards crowded into the doorway, the lamplight gleaming softly on the gilded bronze scales of their

cuirasses. Ikusiven was a small man of spindly build, a fact inadequately concealed by his padded robe and the extra soles on his shoes.

Lord Noish waved the king to the chair of pretence at the head of the horseshoe, which he himself had just vacated, and took another stool that Girios had ready.

"You may sit," said King Ikusiven. "We have been having fine weather, have we not?" His own slave poured his own wine into his own jewelled golden winecup and handed it to him.

"Excellent weather, sire," said Noish. "Though perhaps not so good as the year before last."

"As you say," said Ikusiven, scratching a flea-bite, "though we shall need more rain for a good crop."

"Exactly, sire; we shall need more rain. Perhaps we should all pray to Roi?"

"A meritorious idea; I shall order special sacrifices to the heaven-god. But at least this year is not so dry as last."

While this was going on, Lord Haldu turned to his taster, asking: "Any cramps?"

"No, sir; it's good wine. My lone objection," continued the taster, "is that you never let me drink a whole mug of this good stuff, but only a sip."

As he spoke, the taster's face acquired a curiously strained and unhappy look, as if he were trying not to speak but could not help himself. Haldu looked astonished, then laughed. He said:

"Here, you must have forgotten 'tis not the feast of fools. Girios, bring an extra winecup and fill it for my taster. He's but now rebelled against my inhuman treatment."

Lord Haldu then drank from the cup that the taster had just tested. King Ikusiven was saying:

"The worst weather in the memory of man was when I was a boy of ten."

"There is no possible doubt of that, sire," said Noish.

"It rained all spring, ruined the crops by flooding, and drowned many beasts from the peasants' flocks and herds. Which reminds me: I shall soon order a lion-hunt in the valley of Jumbiar. The beasts have become very bold and destructive there."

"We shall all look forward to it most keenly," said Noish.

"No doubt. This time I will confine myself to the slaying of a single lion. As it is already established that I am the mightiest lion-hunter in Tartessia, I feel I should allow the rest of you a chance at glory also."

"Of course, King Ikusiven," said Noish. "You are without doubt the greatest lion-hunter of not only this but also of all ages. Is't not so, Haldu?"

Lord Haldu raised his head from his winecup to say: "That's

what we say, though we know he is but a cowardly weakling who has never faced a live lion in his life."

Jaws dropped around the tables. Silence fell. King Ikusiven carefully set down his jewelled cup, leaned forward, and said:

"What said you, my lord? If that is a jest, I find it in most execrable taste."

Haldu's face now bore the same flushed, unhappy look that had overspread that of the taster. "No jest, sire. I did but speak what we all know: that your lion-slaying has always been a fraud, as you have neither thews nor courage for such a feat."

Ikusiven's face now flushed too, but with fury. He flung down his personal winecup with such force that one of the uncut jewels leaped from its socket and bounced across the floor. Then he jumped to his feet and clapped his hands. Everybody else perforce rose also. The guards hastened into the room. The king pointed at Haldu and said:

"Take him! My minister, it seems, has gone mad, for he has just vilely slandered and insulted me in the face of all. It is the end of your favor, dog —"

The guards leaped upon Lord Haldu, who made no resistance but stammered: "S-sire! I meant no disrespect. It's just that I cannot help speaking sooth —"

"Head him!" screamed the king.

The guards forced Haldu to his knees. A guard with an oversized broadsword stepped up, swung the great bronze blade, and cut off Haldu's head, which rolled trickling across the floor while the spouting body collapsed.

The guards carried out the remains — three carrying the body and one the head — while the slaves mopped up the blood. Ikusiven's servant had thoughtfully picked up the king's winecup and refilled it. Ikusiven, pale and trembling now, sank back into the armchair and took a big gulp of wine. When he raised his eyes from his cup he said:

"Whether I have the courage to face a lion, I have it to punish insolence and sedition, which is more to the point."

"As you say, sire," said Noish. He beckoned the musicians, who filed in and took their places, and signalled to the keeper of the dancing bear to be ready to begin his act.

"Noish," said the king, "would you like to succeed this unfortunate madman as chief minister?"

Noish dropped to his knees, protesting his unworthiness — but not protesting it too hard.

Two days later, when Lord Noish was securely installed in his new office, one of his servants announced a visitor: Bokarri the wizard.

"Well?" said Noish, looking not at all jolly.

"Good-morning, good my lord," said the small sorcerer. "I see our plans have come to a most admirable fruition."

"Come to the point, my man. The business of the entire empire waits upon my word, and I have no time to waste."

"Very well, great and good sir. I do but ask the fee due me for my help in attaining your present zenithal eminence."

"How much?"

"A mere trifle for a virtual god-on-earth like yourself. A thousand nasses of gold."

"Are you mad, fellow? All you did was refer me to that savage. He's the one who merits the reward, not you."

"But sir, 'tis a well-established usage that the general practitioner splits the fee evenly with the specialist."

"Then ask Zyc for your share of his fee. Now begone."

Bokarri's voice rose. "Lord Noish! I demand justice! I'll not quietly be bilked of my just due, though you be the highest dignitary in Tartessia —"

"Porkedio!" shouted Noish. "Give this rogue a good drubbing and cast him forth. Slay him if he attempts to approach me again."

Gezun sat in the audience chamber of Bokarri the wizard, narrating his adventures: ". . . so I came back to search for her, for I can't live without her. I have a post as assistant beast-keeper in the royal gardens, and when not carrying the animals' food in and ordure out I inquire after Yorida, but to no avail."

Gezun wiped away a tear. He had prudently refrained from telling Bokarri how he had stolen Yorida from Derezong in the first place.

Bokarri stroked his vulpine face — a face now surrounded by bandages and discolored by bruises. "If I help you to find this wench, what can you pay me? It's likely to be a costly enterprise, and you don't impress me as a youth of caste or affluence."

Gezun slipped off his ring. "Here's a ring of a star-metal, forged from the original Tahakh by the great wizard-smith Fekata of Gbu, which came down to my late master Sancheth Sar and was given by him to me. Examine it."

Bokarri scrutinized the dull-gray iron with glittering eyes.

"Help me recover my sweetheart and you shall have it," said Gezun. "There's no room for haggling, because I know its price full well, while on the other hand 'tis the only thing of value I possess."

Bokarri turned the ring over a few times, then said: "Done, if you'll leave the ring with me as

surety. First I must go into a trance and send my soul forth to seek Yorida."

The wizard lighted a little brazer in front of him, inhaled the smoke, and leaned back with his eyes closed. Gezun waited patiently and long. At last Bokarri roused himself, saying:

"She was taken by men of the household of Lord Noish, the new chief minister. Furthermore it has come to me that tomorrow night this Noish means to deliver Yorida to Zyc the Hercynian for his own uses."

"Lyr's barnacles!" cried Gezun. "A Hercynian? He might even *eat* her!"

The fact was that Bokarri's trance was a fake. He already knew all about the bringing back to Torrutseish of Yorida by a squad of Noish's henchmen, and about Noish's plan to deliver her to Zyc, for the good reason that Noish had consulted with him to find out where Yorida was so that he could send his posse after her. Bokarri was not a very competent magician, relying on spying and intrigue to make up for his lack of professional acumen; but in this case his meager skill at divination had proved adequate, and the flying squad had been sent right to the spot.

That, however, had been before Noish became chief minister. Now Bokarri bore a mortal grudge against Lord Noish because of the latter's refusal to pay his fee and the beating that he had received from the minister's servants before being thrown out into the street. Thus he was more than willing to help Gezun to snatch Yorida back, but saw no reason for not extorting the biggest possible fee from Gezun in the process.

"That may be," he said calmly. "Now leave me whilst I consult with the ghosts of my ancestors and the spirits of the elements. Return tomorrow at the hour of sunset, already fed, as we may have a busy evening."

Gezun went, hoping that he was not being foolish in paying the wizard in advance, but the fellow would not work on any other terms. Gezun would have done the same if approached by a person such as himself.

Bokarri, however, did not consult the ghosts of his ancestors or the spirits of the elements. While he did control a small stable of spirits and demons, these were of almost no use to him, because he had, by mistakes in ritual, allowed all the cleverer ones to escape from his control, and the feeble-minded collection remaining could seldom do anything for him that he could not do better himself.

Instead he went to bed and early next morning called upon Derezong Tâsh, whom he had not hitherto met but whom he

had heard of as a rising new wizard in Torrutseish. As neither Gezun nor Noish had mentioned Derezong to him, he did not know that Derezong was already involved in the fate of the fair Yorida of Sederado. After the usual exchange of platitudes and compliments, Bokarri said:

"Good sir, I've come to you because your fame as a master illusionist fills Torrutseish, and the task I've undertaken calls for a skill along those lines exceeding my poor own."

"You flatter me," said Derezong. "But what is your proposal?"

"Well, there's a girl named Yorida . . ." and Bokarri went on to repeat what he knew of the young woman's past and her precarious future. Derezong eyed him sharply, but Bokarri attributed that fact merely to the forcefulness and clarity of his presentation.

"So," he concluded, "it devolves upon me to thwart this delivery of Yorida to the bestial shaman tonight, and for this I need your invincible help."

"Hm," said Derezong. "What's in this for me?"

"I'll pay a hundred nasses of pure gold." This, Bokarri knew, was but a fraction of the value of Gezun's ring.

"How much is this Gezun paying you?"

"My most abject apologies, esteemed sir, but that I can't tell you."

"Oh, well," said Derezong with a cherubic smile, "your tale has so touched my sympathies that I'll take your offer without further chaffering."

So quick an acceptance disconcerted Bokarri, who had expected a long and wearisome haggle. In fact he knew a moment of uneasy wonder whether there might not be more to Derezong's interest in the case than met the eye, but he could not very well back out now.

That night Gezun appeared as directed at Bokarri's house. Bokarri told him:

"I'm sure that within the next hour or two Noish will proceed from his house to the Tower of Kurtevan. I think he and Yorida will each be carried in a separate litter, with the usual escort of whifflers, probably passing along Turnip Street. I shall place you in a litter I've rented. When the leader of the gang of hamals sees my signal he'll lead your litter down the Street of Silversmiths to the intersection with Turnip Street in time to foul Noish's procession. There'll be a fight, in which you shall take part, but being outnumbered you and the bearers will be driven off. Meanwhile I'll try to snatch Yorida from her chair with the help of my magic."

Gezun said: "When Noish finds her gone he'll have the city searched. Where will she be then?"

"On her way with you, I suppose."

"Where shall I go?"

"Well, the Phaiaxians are said to be a civilized and hospitable people. Perhaps you could make a living among them."

Bokarri furnished Gezun with a stout cudgel and led him outside where the hamals and the litter were waiting.

"Get in," said Bokarri. "Dzeurhas knows where to go."

"But you?" said Gezun.

"I follow by another route. Obey my commands and all shall be well."

Doubtfully Gezun climbed into the litter, hitting his head on the top because the sedan-chair had not been designed for Lorskan stature. He was a little appalled at the prospect of starting out for unknown Phaiaxia practically destitute and burdened by a girl companion. Passionately as he yearned for Yorida, he was not sure that this was a practicable enterprise. Having gone thus far, however, he did not feel like retreating.

The hamals hoisted the litter to their shoulders and jogged tirelessly through the darkness. They wound around corners and at last stopped. They stood in the dark, slapping at an occasional mosquito, until Gezun climbed out to stretch his cramped limbs. One of their number, Gezun saw, had run ahead to an intersection, but he was not familiar enough with the city to know where he was.

The bearers talked in low voices. Gezun learned that Dzeurhas was a broken-down former bullfighter with an endless fund of stories of his feats in the arena.

After an interminable wait, the man who had gone ahead came running back. "The signal!" he said. "They come!"

"Which way?" asked Dzeurhas.

"Down Turnip Street, as the wizard said."

Dzeurhas turned to Gezun. "Get back in, sir, and quickly. We move."

Gezum climbed into the litter and was borne off bouncing and swaying. After a bit of this he heard voices ahead which grew quickly louder, and the litter stopped short. Lanthorn-gleams came through the curtains. Dzeurhas was shouting. The litter was set down with a bump.

Gripping his cudgel, Gezun squirmed out of the equipage to find himself in the beginning of a street-fight. His litter had been set down with the front shafts touching those of another and much more splendid litter approaching the same intersection from the left. A big fat man thrust a jowly bald head out of this other sedan-chair and shouted

orders to his hamals, who seemed much more numerous than Gezun's group of five. Gezun soon saw the reason: that a second litter had been set down behind the first, and its bearers had run forward to reinforce their comrades.

There were also several tough-looking parties bearing clubs and wearing helmets and swords. A couple carried lanthorns on poles, and by the feeble light of these Gezun could see that all the fat man's retinue were dressed in tunics and kilts of the same pattern, black with red piping.

Fists and feet had begun to fly; blows and curses sounded. Gezun saw one of the black-and-red clad men knocked down by Dzeurhas's staff. Bokarri's bearers, though fewer, had all come equipped with stout shillalahs.

Gezun whooped and plunged into the fray, lashing about mightily with his stick. One of the helmeted men smashed at him with a cudgel. Gezun caught the blow on his own, and his return slash knocked the stick out of the smaller man's hand. The whiffler went for his sword, but before he could get it out Gezun hit him on the head, knocking his helmet down over his eyes.

Before Gezun could finish his temporarily blinded foe, a club struck his own head, filling the night with a blaze of stars. He staggered and struck blindly. His club thumped against something, and he stepped back to take his bearings.

Faces had begun to appear at doors and windows, and local people called back and forth to one another. One of the lanthorns was down and out. A man was down — Gezun could not tell from which side — and another was crawling away on hands and knees.

Gezun struck a hostile hamal who came at him low with a knife, spinning the man half around into a huddle in the dirt, rammed his stick into the belly of another and doubled the fellow up, took a nasty knock on his left arm, and realized that he was fighting practically alone. A glance showed that his hamals were falling back. Gezun, with swords coming at him, backed up too and then ran with the rest.

Later Gezun and the bearers went back to the intersection, now deserted but for one of their own crew who lay there badly hurt, perhaps dying. They placed the injured man in the abandoned litter and picked it up, and eventually Gezun and his retinue arrived at the house of Bokarri.

Gezun knocked and identified himself. When he heard the bolt drawn back he stepped in, followed by Dzeurhas.

In the front room were Bokarri, Yorida, Zhamel, and Derezong, the last having just weighed out

a hundred nasses of gold, in rings and ingots, which he was now dropping with musical tinkling sounds into a small buckskin bag. Bokarri said to Dzeurhas: "I'll weigh out the trade-metal for you and your crew."

"Yorida!" exclaimed the confused Gezun. "And what do you do here, Derezong?"

The Lorskan wizard smiled pinkly. "Recovering a piece of — ah — strayed property."

"But — but — how did you . . ."

"Shortly after you and she eloped," said Derezong, "Noish's bully-boys invaded my house seeking her, but as she was not there to be found by the most diligent search I got rid of them by soft answers. So I bear you no ill-will, for as things turned out you saved her for me after all. Now as it is late, Yorida and I will be getting home."

"What's this?" cried Gezun. "How got you Yorida from Lord Noish? I was too busy trading knocks to see."

"As to that," said Derezong, "whilst the attention of the minister and his rogues was directed upon you, Master Bokarri and I hauled the wrench from the second litter. Then, lest our direption be discovered inopportunely, I performed the Incantation of Ansuan and cast a pinch of syr-powder, which formed a simulacrum of Yorida in the litter. We cut the cords that bound the authentic maid and hustled her away, and I suppose Noish has conveyed her double on to Kurtevan's Tower to present to Zyc. If so, there'll be surprises this night. Come, child."

"Come nothing!" said Gezun. "She's mine!"

"By what right?" asked Derezong mildly, while Zhamel laid a hand upon his knife-hilt.

"By right of conquest. She loves me, and I'll fight to the death any wight who'd snatch her from me!"

"Be that true, my dear?" said Derezong to Yorida.

"It is not!" said Yorida.

"*What?*" shrieked Gezun.

"I said, it is not," repeated the girl. "You tore me away from Derezong's nice comfortable house with its good food and soft cushions and carried me into the wild mountains, to live in a smelly old cave and sleep in the dirt, with nothing to eat but a stale loaf of barley-bread and that tough old ram you killed. And all you did was talk about yourself, and make love to me, and all the time I was too frightened to say anything for fear you'd slay me in a rage. Derezong is a nice kind master who'll feed me well and won't want me oftener than once a week, and I'm glad to get back to him. So there."

"That," said Derezong, "would appear to be that. Good-night, dear friends."

"Good-night, noble sirs," said Dzeurhas, following Derezong, Zhamel, and Yorida out.

Bokarri said: "You'd better get along, stripling, ere Lord Noish learns how he's been tricked."

"How will he know? It's Derezong has the wench, not I."

"But you were in the forefront of the battle, smiting down his minions scarce farther from him than I am from you. Think not that Noish, no fool, failed to mark your features."

Gezun said: "Hear: I gave you that ring in return for recovering Yorida. Now she hasn't been recovered, and I want it back."

"That her proper owner appeared to claim her is unfortunate for you, but affects our contract not. I found her as promised."

"Curse you! You know what I mean. You called Derezong into this enterprise; otherwise he need never have known."

"How was I to know he owned the girl? You told me nought. Anyway she likes you not, from what little I could understand of her Hesperian gabble. Now pray excuse me, as I'm for bed."

"Give me that ring!"

"You shan't have it. Begone with you, boy!"

"Give it to me!"

"Out, knave, ere I cast a spell upon you! One — two —"

Gezun leaped forward and planted a large fist on Bokarri's jaw. The little wizard spun and staggered. Gezun followed him, punching and kicking. Bokarri cried out as Gezun slammed him into the wall. A feminine voice called an unintelligible question from the back of the house.

Bokarri lay unconscious against the wall, a trickle of blood running from his nose. Gezun tugged the ring of star-metal off his finger, then glanced around. The wizard's strong-box stood still on the floor, the key in the lock. Gezun opened the chest, swept up a handful of gold and silver and copper — rings, torcs, and little wedges shaped like ax-heads — and dropped the trade-metal into his wallet. Footsteps sounded from the rear of the house.

Gezun hastened out the door, closed it softly behind him, and ran in the direction of the stable in which his mule was kept.

Lord Noish's litter came up again to Zyc's gate. Again the upper shutter opened, and the rumbling voice commanded:

"Lord Noish shall lead the maiden in; no others may enter."

Noish led the strangely silent Yorida in through the gate. To Noish's surprise, the girl did not even flinch as they passed the eight-foot Laistrugonian. Noish thought that she must be in some sort of a daze or trance.

Kumo led the pair in through the main entrance to the tower, and closed and bolted it behind

them. Then he led them up the spiral stair to the second storey.

Zyc squatted nude among his cushions as before, but this time he was not eating. The litter of gnawed bones had been cleaned up since Noish's previous visit. Zyc glared at Yorida with terrible eagerness, the whites of his eyes showing in a frenetic gleam. His lips worked and saliva drooled from his mouth.

"Ah," he said. "Lord Noish pay his debts, yes?"

"Aye," said Noish. "Here she is."

"Good. You go now."

"Now that I'm minister," said Noish, "perhaps we shall have further profitable dealings. I have an audacious plan —"

"Yes, yes, but you go now quick." With an animal snarl, a half-roar, Zyc leaped up and hurled himself across the room upon Yorida, his teeth gleaming whitely.

As his clutching hands closed, however, the double of Yorida dissolved into a cloud of whitish powder which drifted away and disappeared.

"Arrr!" roared Zyc. "Stop him!"

The Laistrugonian already stood between Noish and the head of the stair towards which the nobleman was walking. At Zyc's shout, Noish turned around.

"*Hé!*" he cried. "What happened? She was real enough when we set out from my house . . ."

"You fool Zyc, eh?" screamed the foaming shaman. "You no bring girl, you take place of her!"

Zyc started for Noish, who felt inside his tunic and drew a razor-sharp bronze dagger. As he raised his arm, however, his wrist was seized from behind by the Laistrugonian's huge hairy hand. Kumo easily twisted the wrist down, around, and up behind Noish's back until the dagger fell to the floor. Then he twisted farther until a joint gave with a snap.

Noish screamed with pain and horror. Kumo bit off Noish's right hand and began to chew it. Noish continued to scream as the staring eyes in his fat face saw Zyc approach him with gaping jaws.

Zyc tilted his head to one side, lunged, and snapped. Noish's shrieks were cut off as the Hercynian's teeth sank deep into his throat and met.

The sun was up when Gezun cleared the city of Torrutseish and trotted Dostæn out along the river road. He had lost much time in starting. First he had gotten lost in the dark and had taken hours to find the stable. Then he had to rouse a grumbling stablemaster from bed to let his mule out. Then he had to find his way across the unfamiliar city to the east gate and wait for the gate to open for morning traffic, mostly farmers bringing their produce in on their backs to the markets.

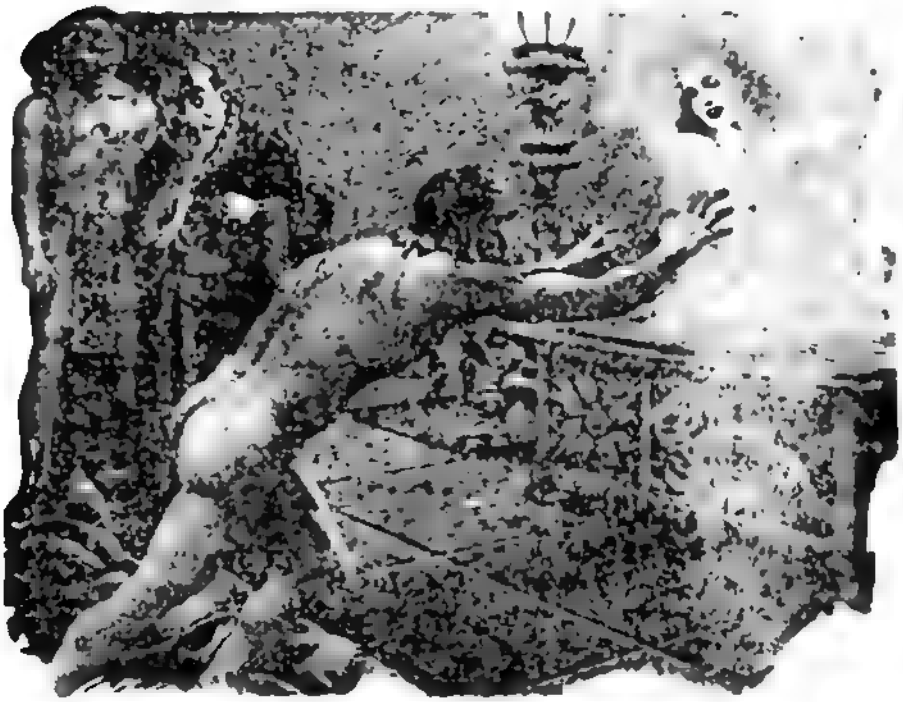
Gezun had fretted sorely until he realized that Bokarri could hardly have the law after him, as that would mean appealing to the minister from whom he had just helped to steal Yorida. Still, Noish himself might have his agents out after him, so Gezun was glad to be on his way.

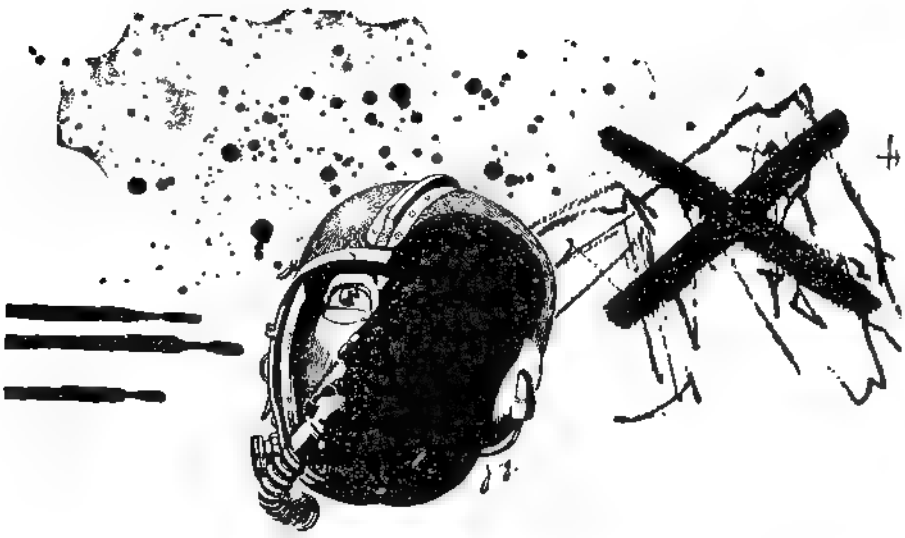
Yorida? Pouf! What did he want with a girl who evidently did not in the least appreciate his virtues? Let her stay safe and snug with Derezong; there were plenty more girls.

According to what Gezun had been told, if he kept on up the Baitis to its headwaters, there was a bridle-trail that led over the mountains to the headwaters of the Anthemius, and a road down that stream to Huperea, the capital of Phaiaxia. And between his hard-won experience and the stake in trade-metal that he had acquired from Bokarri, he should be able to show the cultivated Phaiaxians a thing or two.

He burst into song as he rode.

THE END





EVEREST

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Isaac Asimov

Illustrated by John Grossman

Perhaps you've read how Everest has now been climbed? But have you heard of Planetary Survey? Here's the real truth about it. Everest has been climbed twice)

In 1952 they were about ready to give up trying to climb Mt. Everest. It was the photographs that kept them going.

As photographs go, they weren't much; fuzzy, streaked and with just dark blobs against the white to be interested in. But those dark blobs were living creatures. The men swore to it.

I said, "What the hell, they've been talking about creatures skidding along the Everest glaciers for forty years. It's about time we did something about it."

Jimmy Robbons (pardon me, James Abram Robbons) was the one who pushed me into that position. He was always nuts on mountain climbing, you see. He was the one who knew all about how the Tibetans wouldn't go near Everest because it was the mountain of the gods he could quote me every mysterious manlike footprint ever reported in the ice 25,000 feet up, he knew by heart every tall story about the spindly white creatures, speeding along the crags just over the last heart-breaking camp which the climbers had managed to establish.

It's good to have one enthusiastic creature of the sort at Planetary Survey headquarters

The last photographs put bite into his words, though. After all, you *might* just barely think they were men.

Jimmy said, "Look, boss. the point isn't that they're there, the point is that they move fast. Look at that figure. It's blurred."

"The camera might have moved."

"The crag here is sharp enough. And the men swear it was running. Imagine the metabolism it must have to run at that oxygen pressure. Look, boss, would you have believed in deep-sea fish if you'd never heard of them? You have fish which are looking for new niches in environment which they can exploit, so they go deeper and deeper into the abyss until one day they find they can't return They've adapted so thoroughly they can live only under tons of pressure."

"Well "

"Damn it, can't you reverse the picture? Creatures can be forced up a mountain can't they? They can learn to stick it out in thinner air and colder temperatures. They can live on moss or on occasional birds. just as the deep-sea fish in the last analysis live on the upper fauna that slowly go filtering down. Then, someday, they find they can't go down again I don't even say they're men. They can be chamois or mountain goats or badgers or anything."

I said stubbornly, "The witnesses said they were vaguely manlike and the reported footprints are certainly manlike "

"Or bearlike," said Jimmy. "You can't tell."

So that's when I said, "It's about time we did something about it."

Jimmy shrugged and said, "They've been trying to climb Mt. Everest for forty years." And he shook his head.

"For gossake," I said. "All you mountain climbers are nuts. That's for sure. You're not interested in getting to the top. You're just interested in getting to the top in a certain way. It's about time we stopped fooling around with picks, ropes. camps and all the paraphernalia of the Gentlemen's Club that sends suckers up the slopes every five years or so."

"What are you getting at?"

"They invented the airplane in 1903, you know?"

"You mean fly over Mt. Everest!" He said it the way an English lord would say "Shoot a fox!" or an angler would say, "Use worms!"

"Yes," I said, "fly over Mt. Everest and let someone down on the top Why not?"

"He won't live long. The fellow you let down, I mean."

"Why not?" I asked again. "You drop supplies and oxygen tanks, and the fellow wears a spacesuit. Naturally."

It took time to get the Air Force to listen and to agree to send a plane and by that time Jimmy Robbons had swivelled his mind to the point where he volunteered to be the one to land on Everest's peak. "After all," he said in half a whisper, "I'd be the first man ever to stand there."

That's the beginning of the story. The story itself can be told very simply, and in far fewer words.

The plane waited two weeks during the best part of the year (as far as Everest was concerned, that is) for a seige of only moderately nasty flying weather, then took off.

They made it. The pilot reported by radio to a listening group exactly what the top of Mt. Everest looked like when seen from above and then he described exactly how Jimmy Robbons looked as his parachute got smaller and smaller.

Then another blizzard broke and the plane barely made it back to base and it was another two weeks before the weather was bearable again.

And all that time Jimmy was on the roof of the world by himself and I hated myself for a murderer.

The plane went back up two weeks later to see if they could spot his body. I don't know what good it would have done if they had, but that's the human race for you How many dead in the last war? Who can count that high? But money or anything else is no object to the saving of one life, or even the recovering of one body.

They didn't find his body, but they did find a smoke signal; curling up in the thin air and whipping away in the gusts. They let down a grapple and Jimmy came up, still in his spacesuit, looking like hell, but definitely alive.

The p.s. to the story involves my visit to the hospital last week to see him. He was recovering very slowly. The doctors said shock, they said exhaustion, but Jimmy's eyes said a lot more.

I said. "How about it, Jimmy, you haven't talked to the reporters, you haven't talked to the government. All right. How about talking to me?"

"I've got nothing to say," he whispered.

"Sure you have," I said. "You lived on top of Mt. Everest during a two-week blizzard. You didn't do that by yourself, not with all the supplies we dumped along with you Who helped you, Jimmie boy?"

I guess he knew there was no use trying to bluff. Or maybe he was anxious to get it off his mind.

He said "They're intelligent, boss. They compressed air for me. They set up a little power pack to keep me warm. They set up the smoke signal when they spotted the airplane coming back."

"I see." I didn't want to rush him. "It's like we thought They're adapted to Everest life. They can't come down the slopes."

"No, they can't. And we can't go up the slopes. Even if the weather didn't stop us, they would!"

"They sound like kindly creatures, so why should they object? They helped *you*."

"They have nothing against us. They spoke to me, you know. Telepathy "

I frowned. "Well, then."

"But they don't intend to be interfered with. They're watching us, boss. They've got to. We've got atomic power. We're about to have rocket ships They're worried about us. And Everest is the only place they can watch us from!"

I frowned deeper. He was sweating and his hands were shaking.

I said, "Easy, boy. Take it easy. What on Earth are these creatures?"

And he said, "What do you suppose would be so adapted to thin air and subzero cold that Everest would be the only livable place on Earth to them That's the whole point. They're nothing at all on Earth. They're Martians."

And that's it.

NOT IN THE BOOKS

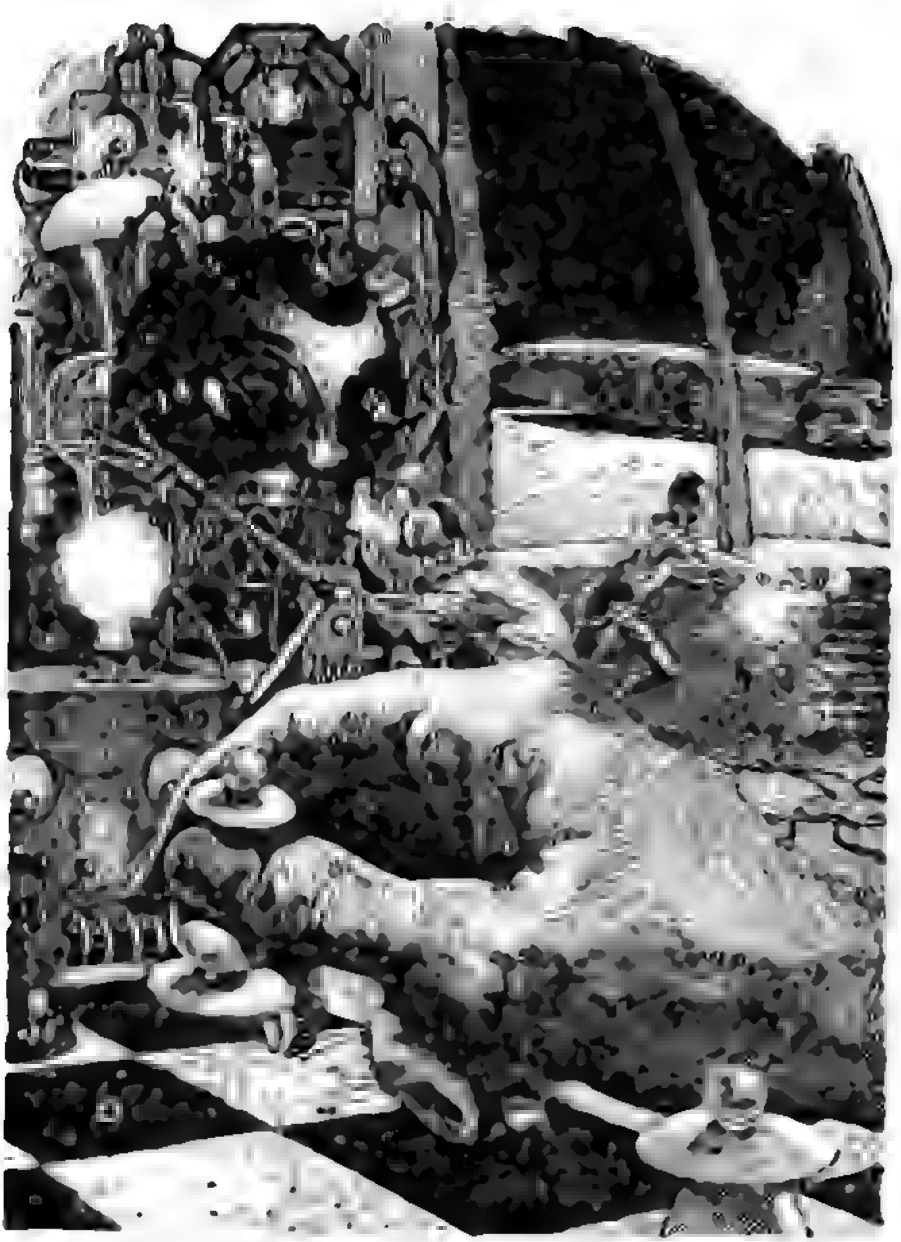
By Gene L. Henderson

Illustrated by Laurence

War has become a science. No longer can man fight with his muscles. It is brain, today, that counts entirely in the conduct of war. The products of that brainwork have reached such a high degree of mechanization and mathematical precision, that "tactics" are no longer a matter of individual military genius, but of mechanical perfection. The guesswork has been removed. The ultimate is perfect stalemate. Victory has become synonymous with impossibility. How, then, can a war be won? What would you do if you were the general staff facing the problem of bringing the conflict to an end?

At the sound of the buzzer, there was a momentary lull in conversation and high brass allowed a look of irritation to show on their faces that battle reports were still allowed to interrupt checkers, chess, and other games of amusement. An enterprising spider had successfully passed all safeguards to the World Council Planning Room several days previously and had spun his webs over tactical textbooks, intelligence reports on enemy forces, and drafting instruments.

An orderly appeared with a slip of paper in his hand and shifted uneasily from foot to foot as he was ignored. Finally Chet Webley, a sudden grin lighting up his freckled and youthful face, left President Simpson and went to the man, scarcely younger than him. The orderly reported, eyes



He reached a hand for the power that would take the machine's guns

straying fascinated to the star on Chet's collar. "Final report on the Mars battle, sir."

A five-star Admiral had just called "Checkmate" to his opponent and shoved back triumphantly. He called out, "How badly did they get whipped this time, Webley?"

"Almost one-hundred percent, Admiral. The Sector Commander reports a final attempt at defense is being set up close to Pluto. He wants a new battle plan."

"Where did our last one come from?" someone asked with an attempt at interest.

"Mendez, a sheepherder from Montana," said Chet promptly.

"Any suggestions as to whom should dash off our next battle plan?" asked the President.

Chet thought for a moment. "Well, I've just read Senator Gluber's recommendation on how each state should be taxed for the total amount of sunshine they receive during the year. I recommend him."

An elderly General snorted contemptuously. "Isn't he that banjo-playing hillbilly that was just elected? He couldn't tell a spaceship from a cigarettelighter."

"Good," said the President, receiving a confirming nod from Chet. "I believe we're all agreed then, that he's our man."

He waited for sounds of protest or opposition but most of the Staff had either fallen asleep or were nodding drowsily.

* * * *

The two figures were only darker shadows in the already dark room. One of them groped from side to side on the wall, looking for the door.

"Just two feet further to your right," a mocking voice called out.

Both men stiffened, not making a move or sound. A short laugh finally broke the silence, followed by a soft but blinding light that flooded the room. Chet blinked rapidly and saw a lone figure seated before a plain desk. His companion, Sid, checked a gasp of amazement too late as both of them recognized Tenno leader, Borj.

"The door," said Borj, motioning behind them. "Were you looking for it?"

"Let's quit stalling," retorted Chet roughly, shifting slightly to better feel the comforting pressure of the blaster at his hip. "Obviously you were expecting us."

"No, not you especially," protested the leather-skinned Borj with a smile. "Someone, yes. And naturally this would be your path."

Chet's brain had completely recovered and he scanned the room without appearing to do so. As far as he could determine, there were no peepholes or slots for weapons, the two doors in the underground room being the only means of access.

Careful as Chet had been, the alien noted his search. "We're the only ones here, either seen or unseen," the two Patrolmen were told.

"I'd like to believe that," snapped Sid unbelievingly.

"You may," assured the No. 1 man of the enemy forces that had slowly been infiltrating into the Solar system. "We know every move you could logically make and have prepared for them."

"Not you, your machines," corrected Chet. He had decided on direct action regardless of the consequences to himself and Sid. Killing Borj would be almost as good as their original mission to destroy the Tenno Empire nerve center, a gigantic electronic brain.

Borj laughed. "Centuries ago you might have been correct but our machines now merely do the thinking we are entirely capable of if necessary."

He still smiled as Chet drew his blaster without warning and pressed the stud. Nothing appeared from the muzzle, but a flat area, several feet from Borj and completely enclosing him, instantly glowed with energy. Baffled, Chet allowed the muzzle to drop towards the floor.

"That action too was probable," he was told. "By now you Earthmen should realize the inferiority of your science. The field surrounding me is very elementary, even our children play with it for amusement."

Chet holstered his blaster. "Okay, you've got us. You know why we came so go ahead and finish it."

Borj unsuccessfully smothered a yawn. "Later," he said disinterestedly "Go ahead, use the door you were searching for. A little more effort might succeed in convincing you how foolish your entire planet is and could even give us a trifle more amusement, although I doubt it."

A mental picture of Earth scientists studying the efforts of mice to solve various maze patterns flashed into Chet's mind. His face reddened slightly but he grasped Sid's arm.

"Let's go," he ordered

The two opened the door and ran down a sloping passageway that ended in another room. Here there were three large and well lighted tunnels leading upward and still another smaller hole, dark, but light from the room indicated that it led to an even lower level. Sid hesitated, then turned to Chet.

"Get down on your stomach," ordered the latter. They dropped to the dirt floor and Chet directed, "Follow me."

He wriggled toward the dark entrance and promptly drew a protest from Sid. "That one leads down, we may as well try to get out of here. Besides, why this waste of time, they're not likely

to hurt us after letting us go."

"This might throw them off," explained Chet, standing up as he reached the entrance. "That snake act just now was to miss any possible knee-high detection devices."

They hurried down the still sloping tunnel, slowed only by the darkness. "What a spot to fall into a deep hole," muttered Sid.

Chet's scalp tingled at the thought. They rounded a bend in the tunnel. "Look!" he called out. "A light up ahead." They approached cautiously and were puzzled to see that it was radiance from the walls and that the tunnel had widened into a room. At the far end was a heavy wooden door with no handle but eight studs imbedded in it.

"Some sort of an electrical lock," Chet finally theorized after examining it. "No telling what the combination is."

"You might even set off an alarm by hitting the wrong one," advanced Sid pessimistically.

Chet thought for a moment. It was a possibility. Then he shook his head. "I doubt it and it's worth a try anyway. We can't go back and no telling who might be along if we stay here."

They first tried each single stud with no success, then started working combinations of pairs and finally triples. After an hour, pausing only to listen anxiously in the direction from which they had come, Chet finally sat down wearily.

"It's got me," he admitted.

Sid reached over and angrily pushed all the studs. There was a loud click and the door moved slightly as an unseen latch released itself. Both men stared at it, surprised and amazed.

"You did it!" exclaimed Chet, springing to his feet. He pulled the door open and stood there, lower jaw hanging in amazement. The door had been covering only a dirt wall!

"Your reaction time is very low," commented a familiar voice. They swung around to see Borj casually leaning against the side of a seemingly dirt door that had swung open behind them

Chet swept his blaster up again and then, as memory flooded back holstered it

Borj laughed. "Very commendable," he said "At least your memory processes seem adequate after a fashion." Chet found himself flushing, rankled by the other's inference that they were mere pecimens to him

"You should've tried it again anyway, you know." chided Borj. "The screen wasn't on and you could've killed me."

His mocking laugh rang out as energy flared along the screen, being sprayed by a thoroughly aroused Chet. Finally the Earthman realized the futility of his defiance and desisted.

Borj turned and spoke rapidly back into the passageway in what was evidently their native language. He turned to the two Patrolmen, his face set in cruel lines. "Enough of playing. As fairly intelligent beings, you realized before the start of your venture the penalty for failure."

A squad of the leather-skinned aliens came from behind him, tube-like weapons held ready. Sid started to draw his but Chet commanded, "Drop it, Sid. Might as well last as long as we can."

Allowed full use of their arms and legs, both men were marched upward. All tunnels appeared to emanate from a common center and Borj finally led them to an immense cavern hollowed in the planet's rock. In the center was a gleaming maze of machinery of glass and metal, suspended by an intricate system of shock absorbers. Even the walls themselves were lined with a soft, spongy-like material that deadened every sound so that it was difficult to hear conversation only feet away.

"Our master brain," said Borj proudly, "Connected with minor ones throughout the base and even in space by radiation waves, the correct solution to every type of problem is instantly available. The more intelligent our enemies, the easier their defeat."

Chet stared at spider-like webs of cables that trailed from the sides of the cavern and connected into the monster brain. The other's words echoed through his brain, "*the more intelligent our enemies. . . .*" He watched technicians carefully stepping around banks of tubes that alternately glowed and died out as incoming data fed into them and was disposed of. He looked over at Borj who sneered sardonically

"I suppose you are thinking how simple it would be to best us if you could destroy the machinery below," he said, gesturing casually at the brain. "You'd find it almost impossible but, even if successful, as I've said before we could still do practically as well."

They were led away from the nerve-center and into an elevator that shot them to the surface of Tenno. Their way led past batteries of weapons, each turret manned only by a single soldier and connected to the underground nerve system. Chet mused on the consternation a successful and sudden attack might cause. He felt sure that Borj was telling the truth that his people would be able to survive such a disaster but there was bound to be a time lapse until human minds could grasp the problems their mechanical slave brain had been solving for them.

"Why do your people resist us?" asked Borj, curiosity softening the normal harsh lines on his face.

"Because we'll fight anyone to

stay free."

"Free from what? Our science could add immeasurably to your way of life. You would, of course, contribute a small number of technicians and materials to us but the total cost would be far less than war has been."

"We'll fight as long as there's one of us left," insisted Chet stubbornly.

"For what gain?" argued Borj. He glanced at the Earthman's bars. "A captain now. By the time you're an old man and too old to enjoy life, you might possibly have become a General. Not now of course."

Before Chet could retort, they were interrupted by a group of officers who were led to Borj and engaged him in excited conversation. The alien leader scowled once, then laughed with satisfaction They went into a plainly furnished office, banks of televisors and computors lining its walls. Judging by the glimpses he was able to get, Chet saw that they led to various sections of the enemy planet and even to battle fleets in space. One that interested Borj showed the conclusion of an immense space battle.

Borj had lost interest in his prisoners and Chet stared at his broad back, wondering if the screen were still present. Both Earthmen had been allowed to retain their weapons by the confident aliens and this might be their opportunity to catch Borj unawares. He finally decided that there were probably electronic scanners connected to the master brain that interpreted all their actions and protected the leader in event of any gesture that could conceivably be hostile.

Finally the conference was over and Borj indicated surprise that they were still there. He summoned the squad leader and gave rapid instructions. As they were about to be led away, Chet asked, "What do you plan on doing with us?"

"I've ordered you executed immediately," replied Borj impersonally, looking through a sheaf of papers he had picked up.

"Why the haste?" asked Chet, hiding the dismay the calloused statement had caused him. Judging by Sid's rapid gulps, he hadn't been so successful.

"You're of no use to us alive."

"Oh," said Chet, pretending sudden enlightment. "Alive we might prove too much of a problem. I thought your air of superiority was a pretense."

The other frowned, then a slight smile curled his lips. "Elementary," he said. "A type of psychology I would expect from a child endeavoring to escape punishment. Do you think for a moment that you could out-think either our electronic brains or us?"

"I think so," asserted Chet.

There was a short period of

silence while Borj attempted to interpret Chet's statement. The Earthman saw, to his relief, that growing interest spread over his enemy's face. "In what way?" the alien finally inquired.

"What about a game of chess played directly with your supposedly infallible machine?" suggested Chet "You're familiar with the game no doubt."

"Oh yes, a very commendable means for utilizing and developing one's logic and sense of deduction. But, it will be of interest to observe your reaction when you realize that even our creations of minerals are superior to you."

"That remains to be proven." said Chet defiantly.

"I'll have a historian familiar with all the Earth rules set up a computor immediately and connect it to the master brain," said Borj. He spoke rapidly into a small speaker.

"Wait a minute," objected Chet. "What happens when I beat your brain?"

"Happens? The very idea is unthinkable as well as impossible."

Chet was insistent. "That's what you think anyway. But supposing I do beat it?"

Borj laughed scornfully. Several technicians who had come in response to his summons grinned when their leader interpreted Chet's question. Finally the alien asked, amused,

"What do you want?"

"Freedom."

"Very well," came the answer, in mock seriousness as the others in the room grinned. "You shall have it." A thick, squat computor was wheeled in and technicians immediately began making adjustments according to the direction of one, evidently the historian.

"On no," objected Chet. "What assurance do we have that you'd give us our freedom?"

Borj seemed genuinely surprised. "You mean our word isn't sufficient?"

"Not for me."

The other frowned heavily. "You're almost too impudent. Very well, what assurance do you desire?"

"Our space cruiser where we can get to it quickly."

"Granted. Only I warn you, any trick to gain access to it will prove to no avail You'll have to defeat the brain fairly."

"I can do it."

Sid had been showing more and more anxiety. "I hope you know what you're doing," he whispered.

"I do," said Chet in low tones. "Just stand by to use your blaster and sprint for the ship if they try to stop us." Both men were aware of the fact that the ship represented the latest Earth science had been able to devise and had already demonstrated its ability to outspeed the enemy. Only the possibility that they could de-

stroy the alien nerve center had prompted the Earth Council to allow the new drive to be placed where its secret might be captured by the enemy. It was a calculated risk that had misfired — thus far.

Finally the calculator was pronounced ready for the game and the Earth spaceship moved to the concrete covered open space immediately outside the office.

During long space flights early in his patrol career, Chet had played numerous games of chess and was considered somewhat an expert by those who knew him. The first few moves by both and he and the machine were with pawns only. Then, with lightening speed, the machine moved to the attack and Chet found himself without one of his knights. Borj beamed with satisfaction and the Earthman realized, with dismay, that the machine had initiative as well as the ability to counter his moves.

After this one disastrous move, Chet grew calm and set up a defense the machine was unable to crack although it checked him several times. It finally attacked until his queen was in such a position that the sacrifice of the machine's queen would enable one of its knights to checkmate him in an additional two moves.

Borj watched his every expression intently and Chet hid his growing excitement and elation by simulating a weak smile. He had now reached the turning point in his plan. Either the next few moves would see them speeding towards Earth or a quick execution would be in order. He delayed, then made his expected move. The machine instantly took his remaining knight with its queen. This left the queen at the mercy of one of Chet's two remaining pawns.

The other pawn had been guarding one of his bishops, it itself being covered by the other one. This defense had remained static for some time, since moving any of the pieces would lay him open to immediate attack and a checkmate by the machine's bishops.

He reached a hand for the pawn that would take the machine's queen and leave Sid and himself but two moves from defeat and death. Instead, he changed his hand and abruptly moved the defending pawn on the other side of the board which left it at the mercy of a machine pawn and the entire side open to attack.

"No!" exclaimed Sid involuntarily.

The smile on Borj's face had frozen in amazement and the machine stilled its hithertofore ceaseless chattering. A large red light on top began flashing a signal of defeat. Those in the room could dimly hear alarm bells from deep within the planet and cables to

the machine in the room began smoking as technicians jumped to break connections.

Several other minor machines broke into open flame, throwing the entire room into confusion.

"Come on," yelled Chet, "let's go!"

No one opposed their dash to the ship although a guard at the air lock raised his tube. His body was instantly encased by crackling energy from Sid's blaster and he crumpled as the two Earthmen piled inside. Seconds later, they were in outer space with only a minor puncture in one compartment where a manually controlled space torpedo had finally reached them. There were growing signs of confusion below but Chet knew it would soon be controlled.

"We've got heavy stuff," Sid shouted. "Why don't we attack the central brain, now that we know where it's at?"

Chet shook his head. "Nope, we're better off by letting them repair it and getting back with what I've learned. This is the turning point in the war." He chuckled. "I'll bet that's a new experience for their machine, he's got the biggest and best headache any human or mechanical brain anywhere's ever had."

"What happened?" demanded Sid. "That was the most stupid move I've ever seen and the machine threw in the towel when it had you licked two different ways."

"Remember when Borj said the more intelligent their enemies, the easier their defeat?" Sid nodded. "Well, I was fairly certain that when the technicians set up the machine, they'd not trouble to include moves that had no bearing on logical action. They assumed that every move I made would be done intelligently. When I didn't, the machine was utterly incapable of comprehending what had happened and the master brain couldn't provide the assistance demanded by the calculator playing the game. So, it went wild and temporarily threw their system out of kilter."

Sid shook his head admiringly. "The luck some people have by being stupid," he said. "But that still doesn't say how we're going to explain why we failed after penetrating to the brain itself."

"We didn't fail," differed Chet. "That's why it's necessary for the brain to continue functioning. We can apply the same principles I did at chess to our battle plans. We'll listen to the wildest armchair strategists and follow their plans instead of the logical ones our generals and admirals figure out. So far we've been losing but I doubt if the machine will ever be able to cope with some of the hindsight ideas I've heard back on Earth after a big battle."

Sid shook his head wonderingly. "What a way to win a war."

THE SAVAGES

By

GEORGE H. SMITH

Man has always wanted to fly. He has always wanted to go to the stars. But now science has pushed the frontier back so far that the nearest star (they say) with a possibility of life like ours is Wolf 359 is many many light years away. No pilot would live to reach it. So, the urge to reach the stars has been dimmed, and as the lazy savages we are, we will not try very hard. We are being more and more discouraged. Where is the incentive we need? How can we supply it?

Illustrated by
Joseph R. Eberle

THE DAMAGED spaceship crashed out of control near the small New England town of Green Elms. It smashed into a farm house, killing an old farmer and his wife and destroying livestock belonging to other farmers. The ship burst into flames when it hit and of its crew only one white furred, long nosed little creature staggered out. It was lying nearby all but unconscious when a group of townspeople and farmers arrived on the scene.

In those days, I was research assistant to the great astrophysicist, Brooks Compton. We flew up from Washington that same night in a plane filled with FBI men and army officers. Dr. Compton had for many weeks been engaged in a bitter battle with the Air Force Command over the Interplanetary Research Unit which he headed. The channeling of government funds into anything as far away as possible interplanetary flight appealed to very few military and congressional minds. We had been facing failure in our battle for funds and a complete shutdown of the project until that night. Dr. Compton was excited as we drew near the wreck in an army jeep. The fire in his blue eyes belied the gray-streaked hair and stooped shoulders of his sixty years.

"Intelligence has reached out across space, Martin," he told me, his voice tight with emotion.

"Intelligence has reached out across the black immensity of space to meet intelligence! This is a great night, my boy! The greatest in the history of mankind."

"Where do you think the ship came from sir?" I asked.

"Well, that is hard to. . . ." began Dr. Compton.

"The General thinks its from Russia," interrupted the sergeant who was driving the jeep.

Dr. Compton favored the sergeant with a cold stare which included the absent general.

"The General?" I asked.

"General Edmunds. He's in command here," the soldier replied. "He told all of us to keep a sharp lookout, that maybe some spies got loose when the rocket crashed."

"Hmmph!" remarked Dr. Compton.

"Wasn't there some sort of strange creature found near the wreckage?" I questioned.

"Oh, sure. The big brass say it's some sort of animal. "Maybe something from Siberia, or something."

The soldier brought the jeep to a screeching halt near a number of other cars. There was a cordon of troops and National Guardsmen around an area two or three miles square. The public strictly wasn't invited and we weren't any too welcome ourselves. General Edmunds we knew

of old. He was one of those young, aggressive and highly competent Air Force generals who came out of the last war. Some years back, like a number of other people, he had been interested in the Interplanetary Research Project. Back in those days, they had ideas of using the moon as a "fortress in the sky." Now, due to "the realities of international developments," the official Air Force attitude was cool and so was Major General Edmunds. Cool but polite. He greeted us with his and-how-are-you-private-smith smile. I think he would have liked to keep us out altogether but Dr. Compton still drew too much water in Washington for that so instead he tried to make sure we didn't see much.

To tell the truth, there wasn't much to see. The space ship was just a tangled mass of twisted and fused metal. It was hard to understand how anything had survived that crash. We picked our way through a rubble of house, trees and ship as best we might with a brace of eagle-eyed young lieutenants for company. There was so little to see that Dr. Compton, whose eyes were sharper than two eagles spent three hours seeing it. We weren't the only ones picking around under glaring army searchlights. There were FBI agents, Project Saucer men, and Navy Intelligence; almost everyone except the Russian secret service.

It was almost morning by the time Dr. Compton, with a notebook full of facts and figures, was ready to leave. By that time, General Edmunds had lost some of his military polish, in fact he was beginning to look somewhat seedy. He yawned elaborately when Dr. Edmunds asked to see the creature from the ship.

"I'm really sorry, Compton," he said, "but it's been taken into Green Elms. The FBI people have taken over that end. They have him at the county jail there, I believe."

So we went into Green Elms which might have been a thriving town in the last century but had been withering on the vine for the last fifty years or so. That morning, however, it seemed to be thriving again. In a few short hours, it had become the newspaper, radio and television center of the nation. We pushed through the crowds around the county jail, which was a three room brick building, only to be informed that we couldn't see the FBI Special Agent in Charge until sometime in the afternoon.

Breakfast was my next thought and Dr. Compton agreed. That also required a wait. Green Elms' only restaurant was packed with newsmen, radio people and sightseers. We bought some Boston papers and read them while standing on the sidewalk in front of

the restaurant. The consensus seemed to be Mars and some of them got pretty lurid about it. There was, however at least one dissenting opinion and a couple of the papers played it up big. Senator Sidney Brinks, chairman of the powerful Conduct of the Peace Investigating Committee, said he believed the ship came from a "foreign" country. He hinted darkly at an attempt to destroy Green Elms. The Senator then went on to laud the virtues of the farmer and his wife who were killed when the "rocket" landed. It seemed the farmer had been an Elk and an Oddfellow. Another member of the committee said something about posthumous medals. Senator Brinks was also quoted as saying that he and his committee were hurrying to Green Elms to squelch the crazy rumors about the ship having come from space.

We had our breakfast finally; a fellow I had known in Washington, a reporter for the *Express* there, was slightly acquainted with the editor of the *Green Elms Weekly Standard* and he inveigled an invitation for the three of us to a New England breakfast. A couple of hours later we were just finishing up when the FBI sent for Dr. Compton. I tagged along as far as the door of the jail. Neither the FBI nor the military had been able to make anything out of what the alien was trying to say and it had struck someone that maybe the nation's leading scientist might do better. They didn't see any reason why I should go in and so I sat on the curb in front of the jail and stared at the crowd of curious who stared back. Dr. Compton spent four hours alone with the creature from the ship in one of the jail's two cells. By the time he was through his lack of sleep was beginning to catch up with him. He thought he was twenty-five but his body was convinced he was sixty. He brushed aside all questions from both officials and newsmen.

"I've got to have sleep now," he said. "I'll have something to say later. It was hard to communicate. I didn't get too much but I hope to learn more next time."

We imposed on the editor and his wife again, this time for a couple of beds. Just before he dropped off to sleep, Brooks Compton told me a few things more.

"That's an interstellar ship out there, Martin. I couldn't get too much. We used signs and mathematical symbols. It was slow going but I did learn that they're from the planet Wolfe 359. They ran into trouble out in our asteroid belt — hit something — that's what caused the crackup. What minds those people must have! What a tremendous undertaking! That fellow thinks he's fallen into the hands of savages,

he wanted me to help him find the civilized people of earth. Imagine the things that we could learn from . . ." His voice trailed off as he fell asleep.

Well, that night the alien tried to escape. Probably, Dr. Compton said later, he was trying to find the civilized people of earth. They said he hypnotized two guards and took the keys to his cell. He was almost in the clear when they spotted him. He started to run and then someone cut loose with a submachine gun. He was dead when they picked him up

We slept right through the excitement and clear around to the next morning. When they woke us up and told us the news, we hurried down to the jail. People were milling about, coming and going, seemingly without purpose. Dr. Compton went in and had a last look at the little creature who had spanned space. By the time he came out, there was quite a crowd of officials on the scene including a number of senators headed by Senator Brinks. I guess you've all seen pictures of the Senator. He's a big florid man with an unhealthy look about him and an air of great importance. He doesn't wear the string tie and frock coat of the cartoon senators but he has most of the characteristics that go with them.

Brooks Compton was tight-lipped and grim when he faced the assembled officials and newsmen. He completely ignored Senator Brinks who was loudly demanding to know what he had learned the day before.

"This is the statement I promised yesterday," began Dr. Compton. "The ship that crashed here was a space ship from Mars. The creature that lies back there in that cell was a member of a highly developed underground civilization on that planet. He and his companions were hoping to contact a civilized race on earth. They brought with them a number of scientific secrets as gifts to the people of earth. Among those gifts, gentlemen, were the secret of space flight and of longevity."

There was a moment of roaring silence then a bedlam that was comparatively silent broke loose.

"Longevity . . . that means long life, don't it?" asked one of the reporters.

"That's right," said the doctor, "the Martians live over . . . four hundred years!"

"Good Lord!" breathed Senator Brinks, looking more apopletic than ever. "Four hundred years! And they were bringing us the secret!"

"And these fools killed the last one of them!" groaned another senator.

Everyone was trying to talk at once. The senators were arguing among themselves, someone was

loudly demanding an investigation and army and navy officers were beginning to ask Dr. Compton intelligent questions about the possible construction of the Martian ship. Finally Senator Brinks made himself heard above the uproar.

"I'm going to see the President at once." he told Dr. Compton. "We'll get some really big appropriations for your project. We'll study the design of that ship out there. We'll build a space ship if it takes all the resources of the country!"

Another senator was talking about a more complete search of the wreckage. "Maybe we'll find some clues," he said. "something to give our doctors a start."

The radio networks had set up their microphones outside the jail and Senator Brinks hurried off to make a statement. He was followed by the gentlemen of his committee and most of the other officials. The newsmen had all rushed off to find telephones and Dr. Compton and I were alone. We walked slowly out of the building.

"You didn't tell me anything last night about any secret of longevity," I said accusingly.

"Didn't I, Martin? Perhaps I didn't think it important at the time," he replied, wiping his glasses and replacing them on his nose.

"You said that it was an interstellar ship. You said it was from the planet of Wolfe 359. Today, you say Mars!"

"Really! Did I say Mars? It must have been a slip of the tongue. I hope no one took me seriously."

"Dr. Compton, you lied! That ship didn't come from Mars; there wasn't any secret of longevity!"

We were walking down Green Elms' almost deserted main street. Things were beginning to get back to normal. Brooks Compton looked up as if he were seeing the stars although there were none visible in the bright New England sky.

"Yes, I lied," he said.

"Why?" I asked. although I was beginning to understand.

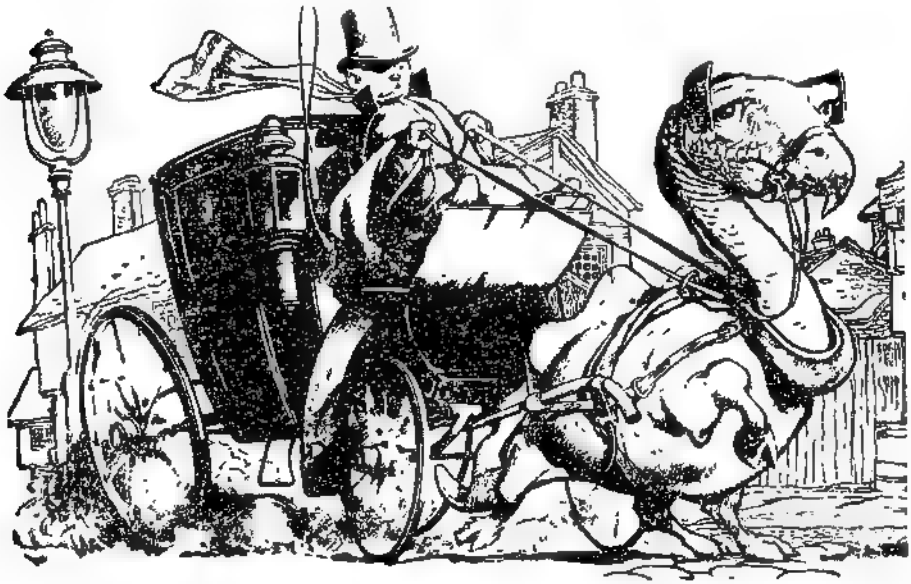
"Martin, I believe we'll go to the stars now. I had begun to doubt it during those long weeks in Washington. I believe our friends from Wolfe 359 have really brought us the secret of space travel. I think that the longevity story was just the spur man needed. Even a twisted soul like Senator Brinks' was stirred by the idea."

"But why Mars?"

"Wolfe 359 is a long way off across an inconceivable span of space, Martin. Even the gift of longevity might dim in their minds if it seemed to be so many light years away. Mars was just a little extra incentive. Yes, I think we'll go to the stars now!"

THE ADVENTURE OF THE

In all the universe there is no planet with a more imitative people than Ioka. Subject them to Space Patrol television programs, and they become Space Patrol addicts. They live their fiction in reality. What happened when the complete works of Conan Doyle reached the planet and Sherlock Holmes became the idol of the little teddy-bear race is the biggest belly-laugh from here to Vega.



The Ioka London was a large collection of peak-roofed buildings, split by winding cobblestone streets, illuminated by gas lamps and lined with ale houses.

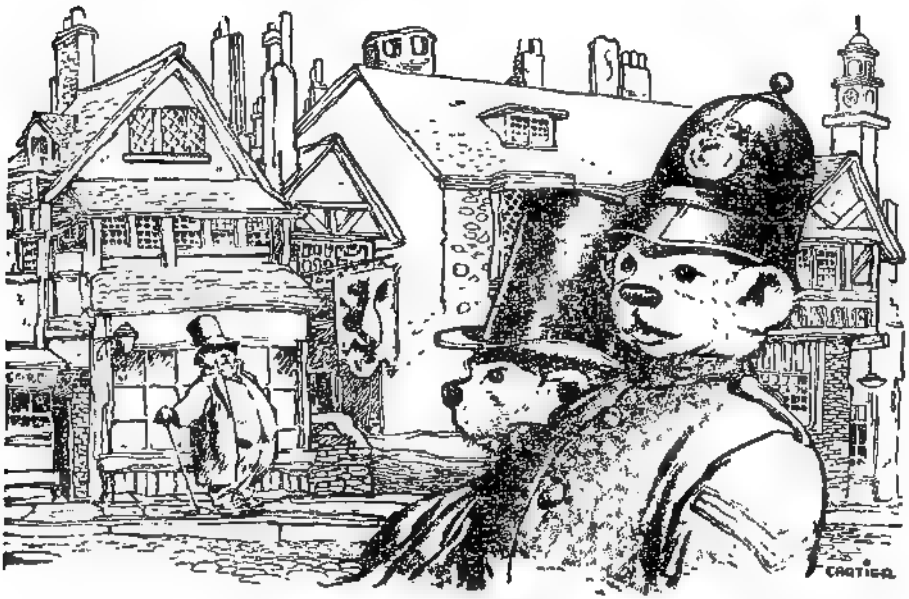
Illustrated by Edd Cartier

MISPLACED HOUND

By

Poul Anderson & Gordon R. Dickson

Here is another story of the hilarious doings of the lovable Hokas, the teddy-bear darlings of the galaxy, the madcaps of mirth.



Whitcomb Geoffrey was the very model of a modern major operative. Medium tall, stockily muscular, with cold gray eyes in a massively chiseled, expressionless face, he was quietly dressed in purple breeches and a crimson tunic whose slight bulge

showed that he carried a Holman raythrower. His voice was crisp and hard as he said: "Under the laws of the Interbeing League, you are required to give every assistance to a field agent of the Interstellar Bureau of Investigation. That's me."

Alexander Jones settled his lean length more comfortably. The office seemed to crackle with Geoffrey's dynamic personality; Jones felt sure that the agent was inwardly sneering at its easy-going sloppiness. "All right," he said. "But what brings you to Toka? This is a backward planet, you know. Hasn't got anything to do with spatial traffic." Remembering the Space Patrol episode, he shuddered slightly and crossed his fingers.

"That's what you think!" snapped Geoffrey. "Let me explain."

"Certainly, if you wish," said Jones blandly.

Geoffrey glared. It was plain that he thought Jones much too young to be the League plenipotentiary to a whole planet, even if it had only been discovered some forty or fifty years ago. Besides representing his culture, the plenipotentiary was supposed to introduce backward natives gradually to civilization.

"Thanks, I will," said the agent. He caught himself, bit his lip, and went on: "The largest problem the IBI faces is interstellar dope smuggling, and the most dangerous gang in that business is — or was — operated by a group of renegade ppussjans from Ximba. Ever seen a picture of one? They're small, slim fellows, with four legs and two arms, muzzled dog-like faces — very clever, and extremely vicious when they go bad. The IBI has spent years trying to track them down, and finally we located their headquarters and got most of them. It was on a planet about six light-years from this one. But the leader, known as Number Ten —"

"Why not Number One?" asked Jones.

"Ppussjans count rank from the bottom up. Ten escaped, and has since been resuming his activities on a smaller scale, building up the ring again. We've *got* to catch him, or we'll soon be right back where we started.

"Casting around in this neighborhood with tracer beams, we caught a spaceboat with a ppussjan and a load of nixl weed. The ppussjan confessed what he knew, which wasn't much, but still important. Ten himself is hiding out alone here on Toka — he picked it because it is backward and thinly populated. He's growing the weed and giving it to his confederates, who land here secretly at night. When the hunt for him has died down, he'll leave Toka, and space is so big we might never catch him again."

"Well," said Jones, "didn't your prisoner know just where Ten was hiding?"

"No. He never saw his boss. He just landed at a certain desolate spot on a large island and picked up the weed, which had been left there for him. Ten could be anywhere on the island. He doesn't have a boat himself, so we can't track him down with metal detectors; and he's much too canny to come near a spaceship, if we go to the rendezvous and wait for him."

"I see," said Jones. "And nixl is deadly stuff, isn't it? You have the coordinates of this rendezvous?" He pushed a buzzer. A Hoka servant entered. The native Hokas all looked alike to Geoffrey: about a meter tall, tubby, golden-furred, with big panda-like heads. A race of overgrown teddy bears. This one wore white robes, a turban, and a crimson cummerbund. He bowed low. "What does the sahib wish?" he asked in his squeaky voice.

"Bring me the big map of Toka, Rajat Singh," said Jones.

"At once, sahib." The servant bowed again and disappeared. Geoffrey looked his surprise.

"The Hokas are very imitative," said Jones apologetically. "This one has been reading Kipling."

The coordinates intersected on a large island off the main continent. "Hm," said Jones, "England. Devonshire, to be precise."

"Huh?" Geoffrey pulled his jaw up with a click. An IBI agent is never surprised. "You and I will go there at once," he said firmly.

"But my wife — " began Jones.

"Remember your duty, Jones!"

"Oh, all right. I'll go. But you understand," added the young man diffidently, "there may be a little trouble with the Hokas themselves."

Geoffrey was amused. "We're used to that in the IBI," he said. "We're well-trained not to step on native toes."

Jones coughed, embarrassed. "Well, it's not exactly that —" he stumbled. "You see — well, it may be the other way around."

A frown darkened Geoffrey's brow. "They may hamper us, you mean?" he snapped. "Your function is to keep the natives non-hostile, Jones."

"No," said Jones unhappily. "What I'm afraid of is that the Hokas may try to help us. Believe me, Geoffrey, you've no idea of what can happen when Hokas take it into their heads to be helpful."

Geoffrey cleared his throat. He was obviously wondering whether or not to report Jones as incompetent. "All right," he said. "We'll divide up the work between us. I'll let you do all the native handling and you let me do the detecting."

"Good enough," said Jones, but he still looked doubtful.

The green land swept away beneath them as they flew toward England in Jones' runabout. Geoffrey was scowling. "It's urgent," he said. "When the spaceship we captured doesn't show up with its cargo, the gang will know something's gone wrong and send a boat to pick up Ten. They'll have an excellent chance of sneaking him past any blockade we can set up." He took out a cigaret and puffed it nervously. "Tell me, why is this island called England?"

"Well," said Jones, "the Hokas are unique. They're highly energetic, naturally cheerful, you might almost say childlike; but they're also possessed of good intelligence and a fantastic imagination. Human technology helped them defeat their Slissii enemies, so they admire us immensely and try to imitate us in every way we'll allow. For instance, all of their nations with whom we've had contact immediately adopted the English language; they're unbelievably quick learners. But with all that, they're also very literal-minded; they have difficulty distinguishing fact from fiction, and since fiction is so much more colorful, they don't usually bother . . . Take the dwellers on the western plains, for example. They've adopted a cowboy culture, the romantic version of nineteenth-century America, complete in every detail. Then there was the Space Patrol — No, never mind that!"

"All right," said Geoffrey. "What's this got to do with England?"

"Well," said Jones, "as you know, backward peoples are supposed to be led gradually into modern civilization, so they can adapt to it without growing pains. But we're still not sure just what is the best starting point for the Hokas; we're still experimenting. About ten years ago, the cultural mission decided to try a Victorian English civilization, and picked this island for the trial. Our duplicators quickly produced steam engines, factories, and so on for them — of course, we omitted the more brutal features of the true Victorian culture. The Hokas were quick and enthusiastic to learn, and carried on from the start we've given them. We also had to shower them with Victorian literature —"

"I see," nodded Geoffrey.

"You begin to see," said Jones a little grimly. "It's more complicated than that. When a Hoka starts out to imitate something, there's no half measures about it. For instance, the first place we're going to, to get the hunt organized, is called London, and the office we'll contact is called Scotland Yard, and · well, I

hope you can understand a nineteenth-century English accent, because that's all you'll hear."

Geoffrey gave a low whistle. "The Hokas are that serious about it, eh?"

"It's not a case of being serious," said Jones. "They're convinced they *are* what they claim to be. Actually, the experiment succeeded so well that, being busy elsewhere, I haven't had a chance to keep up with events in England. I've no idea what that Hoka logic will have done to the original concepts by now. Frankly, I'm scared!"

Geoffrey looked at him curiously and wondered whether the plenipotentiary might not perhaps be a little off-balance on the subject of his wards.

From the air, London was a large collection of peak-roofed buildings, split by winding cobbled streets, on the estuary of a broad river that could only be the Thames. Jones noticed that it was being remodeled to a Victorian pattern: Buckingham Palace, Parliament, and the Tower were already erected, and St. Paul's was halfway finished. An appropriate fog was darkening the streets, so that gas lamps had to be lit. He found Scotland Yard, a big stone building, and set his flyer down in the courtyard. As he and Geoffrey climbed out, a Hoka bobby saluted them with great deference.

" 'Umans!" he exclaimed. "H'I sye, sir, this must be a right big case, eh what? Are you working for 'Er Majesty, h'if h'I might myke so bold as ter awsk?"

"Well," said Jones, "not exactly." The thought of a Hoka Queen Victoria was somewhat appalling. "We want to see the chief inspector."

"Yes, sir!" said the teddy bear. "H'Inspector Lestrade is right down the 'all, sir, first door to yer left."

"Lestrade," murmured Geoffrey. "Where've I heard that name before?"

They mounted the steps and went down a gloomy corridor lit by flaring gas jets. The office door indicated had a sign painted on it in large letters:

FIRST BUNGLER

"Oh, no!" said Jones under his breath.

"What does that mean?" snorted Geoffrey.

"I don't know," said Jones with dismay. "But I told you the Hokas are literal-minded. In the West, the town gambler runs the place, and the sheriff is the title given to the stupidest one around —" He opened the door. A small Hoka in a wing-collared suit and ridiculously large horn-rimmed spectacles got up from behind the desk.

"The plenipotentiary!" he exclaimed in delight. "And another

human! What is it, gentlemen? Has —" He paused, looked in sudden fright around the office, and lowered his voice to a whisper. "Has Professor Moriarty broken loose again?"

Jones introduced Geoffrey. They sat down and explained the situation. Geoffrey wound up with: "So I want you to organize your — C.I.D., I imagine you call it — and help me track down this alien."

Lestrade shook his head sadly. "Sorry, gentlemen," he said. "We can't do that."

"Can't do it?" echoed Jones, shocked. "Why not?"

"It wouldn't do any good," said Lestrade gloomily. "We wouldn't find anything. No, sir, in a case as serious as this, there's only one man who can lay such an arch-criminal by the heels. I refer, of course, to Mr. Sherlock Holmes."

"OH, NO! said Jones.

"I beg your pardon?" asked Lestrade.

"Nothing," said Jones, feverishly wiping his brow. "Look here — Lestrade — Mr. Geoffrey here is a representative of the most effective police force in the Galaxy. He —"

"Come now, sir," said Lestrade, with a pitying smile. "You surely don't pretend that he is the equal of Sherlock Holmes. Come, come, now!"

Geoffrey cleared his throat angrily, but Jones kicked his foot. It was highly illegal to interfere with an established cultural pattern, except by subtler means than argument. Geoffrey caught on and nodded as if it hurt him. "Of course," he said in a strangled voice. "I would be the last person to compare myself with Mr. Holmes."

"Fine," said Lestrade, rubbing his stubby hands together. "Fine. I'll take you around to his apartments, gentlemen, and we can lay the problem before him. I trust he will find it interesting."

"So do I," said Alexander Jones hollowly.

A hansom cab was clopping down the foggy streets, and Lestrade hailed it. They got in, though Geoffrey cast a dubious look at the beaked, dinosaurian reptile which the Hokas called a horse, and went rapidly through the tangled lanes. Hokas were abroad on foot, the males mostly in frock coats and top hats, carrying tightly rolled umbrellas, the females in long dresses; but now and then a bobby, a red-coated soldier, or a kilted member of a Highland regiment could be seen. Geoffrey's lips moved silently.

Jones was beginning to catch on. Naturally, the literature given these — Englishmen — must have included the works of A. Conan Doyle, and he could see where

the romantic Hoka nature would have gone wild over Sherlock Holmes. So they had to interpret everything literally; but who had they picked to be Holmes?

"It isn't easy being in the C.I.D., gentlemen," said Lestrade. "We haven't much of a name hereabouts, y'know. Of course, Mr. Holmes always gives us the credit, but somehow word gets around." A tear trickled down his furry cheek.

They stopped before an apartment building in Baker Street and entered the hallway. A plump, elderly female met them. "Good afternoon, Mrs. Hudson," said Lestrade. "Is Mr. Holmes in?"

"Indeed he is, sir," said Mrs. Hudson. "Go right on up." Her awed eyes followed the human as they mounted the stairs.

Through the door of 221-B came a horrible wail. Jones froze, ice running along his spine, and Geoffrey cursed and pulled out his raythrower. The scream sawed up an incredible scale, swooped down again, and died in a choked quivering. Geoffrey burst into the room, halted, and glared around.

The place was a mess. By the light of a fire burning in the hearth, Jones could see papers heaped to the ceiling, a dagger stuck in the mantel, a rack of test tubes and bottles, and a "V.R." punched in the wall with bullets. It was hard to say whether the chemical reek or the tobacco smoke was worse. A Hoka in dressing gown and slippers put down his violin and looked at them in surprise. Then he beamed and came forward to extend his hand.

"Mr. Jones!" he said. "This is a real pleasure. Do come in."

"Uh — that noise —" Geoffrey looked nervously around the room.

"Oh, that," said the Hoka modestly. "I was just trying out a little piece of my own. Concerto in Very Flat for violin and cymbals. Somewhat experimental, don't y'know."

Jones studied the great detective. Holmes looked about like any other Hoka — perhaps he was a trifle leaner, though still portly by human standards. "Ah, Lestrade," he said. "And Watson — do you mind if I call you Watson, Mr. Jones? It seems more natural."

"Oh, not at all," said Jones weakly. He thought that the real Watson — no, dammit, the Hoka Watson! — must be somewhere else; and the natives' one-track minds —

"But we are ignoring our guest here, whom I perceive to be in Mr. Lestrade's branch of the profession," said Holmes, laying down his violin and taking out a big-bowled pipe.

IBI men do not start; but Geoffrey came as close to it as one of his bureau's operatives had ever done. He had no particular

intention of maintaining an incognito, but no officer of the law likes to feel that his profession is written large upon him. "How do you know that?" he demanded.

Holmes' black nose bobbed. "Very simple, my dear sir." he said. "Humans are a great rarity here in London. When one arrives, therefore, with the estimable Lestrade for company, the conclusion that the problem is one for the police and that you yourself, my dear sir, are in some way connected with the detection of criminals, becomes a very probable one. I am thinking of writing another little monograph — But sit down, gentlemen, sit down, and let me hear what this is all about."

Recovering what dignity they could, Jones and Geoffrey took the indicated chairs. Holmes himself dropped into an armchair so overstuffed that he almost disappeared from sight. The two humans found themselves confronting a short pair of legs beyond which a button nose twinkled and a pipe fumed.

"First," said Jones, pulling himself together, "let me introduce Mr. —"

"Tut-tut, Watson," said Holmes. "No need. I know the estimable Mr. Gregson by reputation if not by sight."

"Geoffrey, dammit!" shouted the IBI man.

Holmes smiled gently. "Well, sir, if you wish to use an alias there is no harm done. But between us, we may as well relax, eh?"

"H-h-how," stammered Jones, "do you know that he's named Gregson?"

"My dear Watson," said Holmes, "since he is a police officer, and Lestrade is already well known to me, who else could he be? I have heard excellent things of you, Mr. Gregson. If you continue to apply my methods, you will go far."

"Thank you," snarled Geoffrey. Jones thought that the Hoka imaginativeness was really outdoing itself this time.

Holmes made a bridge of his fingers. "Well, Mr. Gregson," he said, "let me hear your problem. And you, Watson, will no doubt want to take notes. You will find pencil and paper on the mantel."

Gritting his teeth, Jones got them while Geoffrey launched into the story, interrupted only briefly by Holmes' "Are you getting this all down, Watson?" or occasions when the great detective paused to repeat slowly something he himself had interjected so that Jones could copy it word for word.

When Geoffrey had finished, Holmes sat silent for a while, puffing on his pipe. "I must admit," he said finally, "that the case has its interesting aspects. I confess to being puzzled by the

curious matter of the Hound."

"But I didn't mention any hound," said Geoffrey numbly.

"That is the curious matter," replied Holmes. "The area in which you believe this criminal to be hiding is Baskerville territory, and you didn't mention a Hound once." He sighed, and turned to the Scotland Yard Hoka. "Well, Lestrade," he went on, "I imagine we'd all better go down to Devonshire and you can arrange there for the search Gregson desires. I believe we can catch the 8:05 out of Paddington tomorrow morning."

"Oh, no," said Geoffrey, recovering some of his briskness. "We can fly down tonight."

Lestrade was shocked. "But I say," he exclaimed. "That just isn't done."

"Nonsense, Lestrade," said Holmes.

"Yes, Mr. Holmes," said Lestrade meekly.

Geoffrey sat in the front compartment of the runabout with Jones, while Holmes and Lestrade were in the rear watching the landscape. "Look here, Jones," said the IBI man, "can't you get these Hokas somewhat more under control?"

"That's the trouble, Greg — I mean Geoffrey," said Jones. "The Hokas are so damn sincere they almost hypnotize you. Holmes has assumed that I'm Watson and you're Gregson — Oh, not consciously, any more than he consciously thinks he's the original Sherlock Holmes. But subconsciously — and if the logic of whatever wacky assumption the Hokas make demands that we fit into a particular role, well, they can easily rationalize the discrepancies. I was Supreme Coordinator of the Space Patrol once —" He smiled wryly. "Now, it seems, I've been demoted to Watson."

"Well, we'll just have to play along, I guess," Geoffrey sighed. "As if we didn't have trouble enough! It's not only a matter of finding Number Ten; he's going to be armed, and cunning, and dangerous."

"Stick it out," said Jones. Ten years on Toka had hardened him.

"Oh, don't worry about any effect they have on me," said Geoffrey. "I'll play along with them, and snap back to normal when we're alone like this." He fumbled in his tunic. "Damn it! I'm all out of cigarets. Got any on you, Watson?"

The village of St. Vitus-Where-He-Danced was a dozen thatch-roofed houses and shops, a church, and a tavern, set down in the middle of rolling gray-green moors. Not far away, Jones could see a clump of trees which he was told surrounded Baskerville Hall. The inn had a big signboard announcing "The George and Dragon,"

with a picture of a Hoka in armor spearing some obscure monster. Entering the low-ceilinged taproom, Jones' party were met by an overawed landlord and shown to clean, quiet rooms whose only drawback was the fact that the beds were built for one-meter Hokas.

By then it was night. Holmes was outside somewhere, bustling around and talking to the villagers, and Lestrade went directly to bed; but Jones and Geoffrey came back downstairs to the taproom. It was full of a noisy crowd of Hoka farmers and tradesmen, some talking in their squeaky voices, some playing darts, some clustering around the two humans. A square, elderly native introduced as Farmer Toowey joined them at their table.

"Ah, lad," he said, "it be turrible what 'yeou zee on the moor o' nights." And he buried his nose in the pint mug which should have held beer but, true to an older tradition, brimmed with the fiery liquor this high-capacity race had drunk from time immemorial. Jones, warned by past experience, sipped more cautiously at his pint; but Geoffrey was sitting with a half-empty mug and a somewhat wild look in his eyes.

"You mean the Hound?" asked Jones

"I du," said Farmer Toowey. "Black, 'tis, an' bigger nor any bullock. An' they girt teeth! One chomp and yeou'm gone."

"Is that what happened to Sir Henry Baskerville?" queried Jones. "Nobody seems to know where he's been for a long time."

"Swall'd um whole," said Toowey darkly, finishing his pint and calling for another one. "Ah, poor Sir Henry! He was a good man, he was. When we were giving out new names, like the human book taught us, he screamed and fought, for he knew there was a curse on the Baskervilles, but —"

"Tha dialect's slippin', Toowey," said another Hoka.

"I be zorry," said Toowey. "I be oold, an' betimes I forget masel'."

Privately, Jones wondered what the real Devonshire had been like. The Hokas must have made this one up out of whole cloth.

Sherlock Holmes entered in high spirits and sat down with them. His beady black eyes glittered. "The game is afoot, Watson!" he said. "The Hound has been doing business as usual. Strange forms seen on the moors of late — I daresay it's our criminal, and we shall soon lay him by the heels."

"Ridic'lous," mumbled Geoffrey. "Ain't — isn't any Hound. We're affer dope smuggler, not some son of a — YOWP!" A badly thrown dart whizzed by his ear.

"Do you have to do that?" he quavered.

"Ah, they William," chuckled Toowey. "Ee's a fair killer, un is."

Another dart zoomed over Geoffrey's head and stuck in the wall. The IBI man choked and slid under the table — whether for refuge or sleep, Jones didn't know.

"Tomorrow," said Holmes, "I shall measure this tavern. I always measure," he added in explanation. "Even when there seems to be no point in it."

The landlord's voice boomed over the racket. "Closing time, gentlemen. It is time!"

The door flew open and banged to again. A Hoka stood there, breathing hard. He was unusually fat, and completely muffled in a long black coat; his face seemed curiously expressionless, though his voice was shrill with panic.

"Sir Henry!" cried the landlord. "Yeou'm back, squire!"

"The Hound," wailed Baskerville. "The Hound is after me!"

"Yeou've na cause tu fee-ar naow, Sir Henry," said Farmer Toowey. " 'Tis Sheerlock Holmes unself coom down to track yan brute."

Baskerville shrank against the wall. "Holmes?" he whispered.

"And a man from the IBI," said Jones. "But we're really after a criminal lurking on the moors —"

Geoffrey lifted a tousled head over the table. "Isn't no Hound," he said. "I'm affer uh dirty ppussjan, I am. Isn't no Hound nowheres."

Baskerville leaped. "It's at the door!" he shrieked wildly. Plunging across the room, he went through the window in a crash of glass.

"Quick, Watson!" Holmes sprang toward the door, pulling out his archaic revolver. "We'll see if there is a Hound or not!" He pushed through the panicky crowd and flung the door open.

The thing that crouched there, dimly seen by the firelight spilling out into darkness, was long and low and black, the body a vague shadow, a fearsome head dripping cold fire and snarling stiffly. It growled and took a step forward.

"Here naow!" The landlord plunged ahead, too outraged to be frightened. "Yeou can't coom in here. 'Tis closing time!" He thrust the Hound back with his foot and slammed the door.

"After him, Watson!" yelled Holmes. "Quick, Gregson!"

"Eek," said Geoffrey.

He must be too drunk to move. Jones had consumed just enough to dash after Holmes. They stood in the entrance, peering into darkness.

"Gone," said Jones.

"We'll track him down!" Holmes paused to light his bull's-eye lantern, button his long coat, and jam his deerstalker cap more firmly down over his ears. "Fol-

"Aha! A sea-faring man with red hair and a peg leg has passed by here on his way to drown a sackful of kittens."

low me."

No one else stirred as Holmes and Jones went into the night. It was pitchy outside. The Hokas had better night vision than humans, and Holmes' furry hand closed on Jones' to lead him. "Confound these cobblestones!" said the detective. "No tracks whatsoever. Well, come along." They trotted from the village.

"Where are we going?" asked Jones.

"Out by the path to Baskerville Hall," replied Holmes sharply. "You would hardly expect to find the Hound anyplace else, would you, Watson?"

Properly rebuked, Jones lapsed into silence, which he didn't have the courage to break until, after what seemed an endless time, they came to a halt. "Where are we now?" he inquired of the night.

"About midway between the village and the Hall," replied the voice of Holmes, from about the level of Jones' waist. "Compose yourself, Watson, and wait while I examine the area for clues." Jones felt his hand released, and heard the sound of Holmes moving away and rustling about on the ground. "Aha!"

"Find something?" asked Jones,

looking nervously around him.

"Indeed I have, Watson," answered Holmes. "A seafaring man with red hair and a peg leg has recently passed by here on his way to drown a sackful of kittens."

Jones blinked. "What?"

"A seafaring man —" Holmes began again patiently.

"But —" stammered Jones. "But how can you tell that?"

"Childishly simple, my dear Watson," said Holmes. The light pointed to the ground. "Do you see this small chip of wood?"

"Y-yes. I guess so."

"By its grain and seasoning, and the type of wear it has had, it is obviously a piece which has broken off a peg leg A touch of tar upon it shows that it belongs to a seafaring man. But what would a seafaring man be doing on the moors at night?"

"That's what I'd like to know," said Jones.

"We may take it," Holmes went on, "that only some unusual reason could force him out with the Hound running loose. But when we realize that he is a red-headed man with a terrific temper and a sackful of kittens with which he is totally unable to put up for another minute, it becomes obvious that he has sallied forth in a fit of exasperation to drown them."

Jones' brain, already spinning somewhat dizzily under the effect of the Hoka liquor, clutched frantically at this explanation, in an attempt to sort it out. But it seemed to slip through his fingers.

"What's all that got to do with the Hound, or the criminal we're after?" he asked weakly.

"Nothing, Watson," reproved Holmes sternly. "Why should it have?"

Baffled, Jones gave up.

Holmes poked around for a few more minutes, then spoke again "If the Hound is truly dangerous, it should be sidling around to overwhelm us in the darkness It should be along very shortly. Hah!" He rubbed his hands together. "Excellent!"

"I suppose it is," said Jones feebly

"You stay here, Watson," said Holmes, "and I will move on down the path a ways. If you see the creature, whistle." His lantern went out and his footsteps moved away.

Time seemed to stretch on interminably. Jones stood alone in the darkness, with the chill of the moor creeping into his bones as the liquor died within him, and wondered why he had ever let himself in for this in the first place. What would his wife say? What earthly use would he be even if the Hound should appear? With his merely human night vision, he could let the beast stroll past within arm's reach and never know it . . . Of course, he could probably hear

it ! ! !

Come to think of it, what kind of noise would a monster make when walking? Would it be a *pad-pad*, or a sort of *shuffle-shuffle-shuffle* like the sound on the path to his left?

The sound — *Yipe!*

The night was suddenly shattered for him. An enormous section of the blackness reared up and smashed into him with the solidity and impact of a brick wall. He went spinning down into the star-streaked oblivion of unconsciousness.

When he opened his eyes again, it was to sunlight streaming in through the leaded windows of his room. His head was pounding, and he remembered some fantastic nightmare in which — hah!

Relief washing over him, he sank back into bed. Of course. He must have gotten roaring drunk last night and dreamt the whole weird business. His head was splitting. He put his hands up to it.

They touched a thick bandage.

Jones sat up as if pulled on a string. The two chairs which had been arranged to extend the bed for him went clattering to the floor. "Holmes!" he shouted. "Geoffrey!"

His door opened and the individuals in question entered, followed by Farmer Toowey. Holmes was fully dressed, fuming away on his pipe; Geoffrey looked red-eyed and haggard. "What happened?" asked Jones wildly.

"You didn't whistle," said Holmes reproachfully.

"Aye, that yeou di'n't," put in the farmer. "When they boor yeou in, the face were white nor a sheet, laike. Fair horrible it were, the look on tha face, lad."

"Then it wasn't a dream!" said Jones, shuddering.

"I — er — I saw you go out after the monster," said Geoffrey, looking guilty. "I tried to follow you, but I couldn't get moving, for some reason." He felt gingerly of his own head.

"I saw a black shape attack you, Watson," added Holmes. "I think it was the Hound, even though that luminous face wasn't there. I shot at it but missed, and it fled over the moors. I couldn't pursue it with you lying there, so I carried you back. It's late afternoon now — you slept well, Watson!"

"It must have been the ppussjan," said Geoffrey with something of his old manner. "We're going to scour the moors for him today."

"No, Gregson," said Holmes. "I am convinced it was the Hound."

"Bah!" said Geoffrey. "That thing last night was only — was only — well, it was not a ppussjan. Some local animal, no doubt."

"Aye," nodded Farmer Too-

wey. "The Hound, un were, that."

"*Not the Hound!*" yelled Geoffrey. "The ppussjan, do you hear? The Hound is pure superstition. There isn't any such animal."

Holmes wagged his finger. "Temper, temper, Gregson," he said.

"*And stop calling me Gregson!*" Geoffrey clutched his temples. "Oh, my head —!"

"My dear young friend," said Holmes patiently, "it will repay you to study my methods if you wish to advance in your profession. While you and Lestrade were out organizing a futile search party, I have been studying the terrain and gathering clues A clue is the detective's best friend, Gregson. I have five hundred measurements, six plaster casts of footprints several threads torn from Sir Henry's coat by a splinter last night, and numerous other items. At a conservative estimate, I have gathered five pounds of clues."

"Listen." Geoffrey spoke with dreadful preciseness. "We're here to track down a dope smuggler, Holmes. A desperate criminal. We are not interested in country superstitions."

"I am, Gregson," smiled Holmes.

With an inarticulate snarl, Geoffrey turned and whirled out of the room. He was shaking. Holmes looked after him and tut-tutted. Then, turning to Jones: "Well, Watson, how do you feel now?"

Jones got carefully out of bed. "Not too bad," he admitted. "I've got a thumping headache, but an athetrine tablet will take care of that."

"Oh, that reminds me —" While Jones dressed, Holmes took a small flat case out of his pocket. When Jones looked that way again, Holmes was injecting himself with a hypodermic syringe.

"Hey!" cried the human. "What's that?"

"Morphine, Watson," said Holmes. "A seven percent solution. It stimulates the mind, I've found."

"Oh, no!" said Jones. The thought of what would happen to a plenipotentiary who let narcotics fall into the hands of natives brought his sick feeling back.

Holmes leaned over and whispered in some embarrassment: "It's really distilled water, Watson. I couldn't get any morphine. But it's expected of me. One has one's position to keep up."

"Oh," said Jones feebly. "Of course."

While he stowed away a man-sized dinner, Holmes climbed up on the roof and lowered himself down the chimney in search of possible clues. He emerged black and cheerful. "Nothing, Watson," he reported. "But we must be thorough." Then, briskly: "Now come. We've work to do."

"Where?" asked Jones. "With the search party?"

"Oh, no. They will only alarm some harmless wild animals, I fear. We are going exploring elsewhere. Farmer Toowey here has kindly agreed to guide us."

"S'archin', laike," nodded the old Hoka.

As they emerged into the sunlight, Jones saw the search party, a hundred or so local yokels who had gathered under Lestrade's direction with clubs, pitchforks, and flails to beat the bush for the Hound — or for the ppussjan, if it came to that. One enthusiastic farmer drove a huge "horse"-drawn reaping machine. Geoffrey was scurrying up and down the line, screaming as he tried to bring some order into it. Jones felt sorry for him.

They struck out down the path across the moor. "First we're off to Baskerville Hall," said Holmes. "There's something deucedly odd about Sir Henry Baskerville. He disappears for weeks, and then reappears last night, terrified by his ancestral curse, only to dash out onto the very moor which it is prowling. Where has he been in the interim, Watson? Where is he now?"

"Hm — yes," agreed Jones. "This Hound business and the ppussjan — do you think there can be some connection between the two?"

"Never reason before you have all the facts, Watson," said Holmes. "It is the cardinal sin of all young police officers, such as our impetuous friend Gregson."

Jones couldn't help agreeing. Geoffrey was so intent on his main assignment that he just didn't take time to consider the environment; to him, this planet was only a backdrop for his search. Of course, he was probably a cool head ordinarily, but Sherlock Holmes could unseat anyone's sanity.

Jones remembered that he was unarmed. Geoffrey had his raythrower, but this party only had Holmes' revolver and Toowey's gnarled staff. He gulped and tried to dismiss thoughts of the thing that had slugged him last night. "A nice day," he remarked to Holmes.

"It is, is it not? However —" said Holmes, brightening up, "some of the most bloodcurdling crimes have been committed on fine days. There was, for example, the Case of the Dismembered Bishop — I don't believe I have ever told you about it, Watson. Do you have your notebook at hand?"

"Why, no," said Jones, somewhat startled.

"A pity," said Holmes. "I could have told you not only about the Dismembered Bishop, but about the Leaping Caterpillar, the Strange Case of the Case of Scotch, and the Great

Ghastly Case — all very interesting problems. How is your memory?" he asked suddenly.

"Why — good, I guess," said Jones.

"Then I will tell you about the Case of the Leaping Caterpillar, which is the shortest of the lot," commenced Holmes. "It was considerably before your time, Watson. I was just beginning to attract attention with my work; and one day there was a knock on the door and in came the strangest —"

"Here be Baskerville Hall, laike," said Farmer Toowey.

An imposing Tudoresque pile loomed behind its screen of trees. They went up to the door and knocked. It opened, and a corpulent Hoka in livery regarded them with frosty eyes. "Tradesmen's entrance in the rear," he said.

"Hey!" cried Jones.

The butler noticed his humanness and became respectful. "I beg your pardon, sir," he said. "I am somewhat near-sighted, and — I am sorry, sir, but Sir Henry is not at home."

"Where is he, then?" asked Holmes sharply.

"In his grave, sir," said the butler sepulchrally.

"Huh?" said Jones.

"His grave?" barked Holmes. "Quick, man! Where is he buried?"

"In the belly of the Hound, sir. If you will pardon the expression."

"Aye, aye," nodded Farmer Toowey. "Yan Hound, ee be a hungry un, ee be."

A few questions elicited the information that Sir Henry, a bachelor, had disappeared one day serveral weeks ago while walking on the moors, and had not been heard from since. The butler was surprised to learn that he had been seen only last night, and brightened visibly. "I hope he comes back soon, sir," he said. "I wish to give notice. Much as I admire Sir Henry, I cannot continue to serve an employer who may at any moment be devoured by monsters."

"Well," said Holmes, pulling out a tape measure, "to work, Watson."

"Oh, no, you don't!" This time Jones asserted himself. He couldn't see waiting around all night while Holmes measured this monstrosity. "We've got a ppussjan to catch, remember?"

"Just a little measurement," begged Holmes.

"No!"

"Not even one?"

"All right." Jones relented at the wistful tone. "Just one."

Holmes beamed and, with a few deft motions, measured the butler.

"I must say, Watson, that you can be quite tyrannical at times," he said. Then, returning to Hoka

normal: "Still, without my Boswell, where would I be?" He set off a brisk trot, his furry legs twinkling in the late sunlight. Jones and Toowey stretched themselves to catch up.

They were well out on the moor again when the detective stopped and, his nose twitching with eagerness, leaned over a small bush from which one broken limb trailed on the ground. "What's that?" asked Jones.

"A broken bush, Watson," said Holmes snappishly. "Surely even you can see that."

"I know. But what about it?"

"Come, Watson," said Holmes sternly. "Does not this broken bush convey some message to you? You know my methods. Apply them!"

Jones felt a sudden wave of sympathy for the original Dr. Watson. Up until now he had never realized the devilish cruelty inherent in that simple command to apply the Holmesian methods. Apply them — how? He stared fiercely at the bush, which continued to ignore him, without being able to deduce more than that it was (a) a bush and (b) broken.

"Uh — a high wind?" he asked hesitantly.

"Ridiculous, Watson," retorted Holmes. "The broken limb is still green; doubtless it was snapped last night by something large passing by in haste. Yes, Watson, this confirms my suspicions. The Hound has passed this way on its way to its lair, and the branch points us the direction we must follow."

"They be tu Grimpen Mire, a be," said Farmer Toowey dubiously. "Yan mire be impassable, un be."

"Obviously it is not, if the Hound is there," said Holmes. "Where it can go, we can follow. Come, Watson!" And he trotted off, his small body bristling with excitement.

They went through the brush for some minutes till they came to a wide boggy stretch with a large signboard in front of it:

GRIMPEN MIRE
Four Miles Square
Danger!!!!!!

"Watch closely, Watson," said Holmes. "The creature has obviously leaped from tussock to tussock. We will follow his path, watching for trampled grass or broken twigs. Now, then!" And bounding past the boundary sign, Holmes landed on a little patch of turf, from which he immediately soared to another one.

Jones hesitated, gulped, and followed him. It was not easy to progress in jumps of a meter or more, and Holmes, bouncing from spot to spot, soon pulled away. Farmer Toowey cursed and grunted behind Jones. "Eigh, ma oold boons can't tyke the leapin' na moor, there can't," he mut-

tered when they paused to rest. "If we'd knowed the Mire were tu be zo much swink, we'd never a builted un, book or no book."

"You made it yourselves?" asked Jones. "It's artificial?"

"Aye, lad, that un be. 'Twas in the book, Grimpen Mire, an' un swall'd many a man doon, un did. Many brave hee-arts lie asleep in un deep." He added apologetically: "Ow-ers be na zo grimly, though un tried hard. Ow-ers, yeou oonly get tha feet muddy, a-crossin' o' 't. Zo we stay well away fran it, yeou understand."

Jones sighed.

The sun was almost under the hills now, and long shadows swept down the moor. Jones looked back, but could not make out any sign of Hall, village, or search party. A lonesome spot — not exactly the best place to meet a demoniac Hound, or even a ppussjan. Glancing ahead, he could not discern Holmes either, and he put on more speed.

An island — more accurately, a large hill — rose above the quaking mud. Jones and Toowey reached it with a final leap. They broke through a wall of trees and brush screening its stony crest. Here grew a thick patch of purple flowers, many meters across. Jones halted, looked at them, and muttered an oath. He'd seen those blossoms depicted often enough in news articles.

"Nixl weed," he said. "So this *is* the ppussjan's hideout!"

Dusk came swiftly as the sun disappeared. Jones remembered again that he was unarmed, and strained wildly through the gathering dimness. "Holmes!" he called. "Holmes! I say, where are you, old fellow?" He snapped his fingers and swore. *Damn! Now I'm doing it!*

A roar came from beyond the hilltop. Jones leaped back. A tree stabbed him with a sharp branch. Whirling around, he struck out at the assailant. "Ouch!" he yelled. "Heavens to Betsy!" he added, though not in precisely those words.

The roar lifted again, a bass bellow that rumbled down to a savage snarling. Jones clutched at Farmer Toowey's smock. "What's that?" he gasped. "What's happening to Holmes?"

"Might be Hound's got un," offered Toowey stolidly. "We hears un eatin', laike."

Jones dismissed the blood thirsty notion with a frantic gesture. "Don't be ridiculous," he said.

"Ridiculous I may be," said Toowey stubbornly, "but they girt Hound be hungry, for zartin sure."

Jones' fear-tautened ears caught a new sound — footsteps from over the hill. "It's — coming this way," he hissed.

Toowey muttered something that sounded like "dessert."

Setting his teeth, Jones plunged

forward. He topped the hill and sprang, striking a small solid body and crashing to earth. "I say, Watson," came Holmes' testy voice, "this really won't do at all. I have told you a hundred times that such impetuosity ruins more good police officers than any other fault in the catalogue."

"Holmes!" Jones picked himself up, breathing hard. "My God, Holmes, it's you! But that other noise — the bellowing —"

"That," said Holmes, "was Sir Henry Baskerville when I took the gag out of his mouth. Now come along, gentlemen, and see what I have found."

Jones and Toowey followed him through the nixl patch and down the rocky slope beyond it. Holmes drew aside a bush and revealed a yawning blackness. "I thought the Hound would shelter in a cave," he said, "and assumed he would camouflage its entrance. So I merely checked the bushes. Do come in, Watson, and relax."

Jones crawled after Holmes The tunnel widened into an artificial cave, about two meters high and three square, lined with a spray-plastic — not too bad a place. By the vague light of Holmes' bull's-eye, Jones saw a small cot, a cookstove, a radio transceiver, and a few luxuries. The latter, apparently, included a middle-aged Hoka in the tattered remnants of a once-fine tweed suit. He had been fat, from the way his skin hung about him, but was woefully thin and dirty now. It hadn't hurt his voice, though — he was still swearing in a loud bass as he stripped the last of his bonds from him.

"Damned impertinence," he said. "Man isn't even safe on his own grounds any more. And the rascal had the infernal nerve to take over the family legend — *my* ancestral curse, damme!"

"Calm down, Sir Henry," said Holmes. "You're safe now."

"I'm going to write to my M.P.," mumbled the real Baskerville. "I'll tell him a thing or two, I will. There'll be questions asked in the House of Commons, egad."

Jones sat down on the cot and peered through the gloom. "What happened to you, Sir Henry?" he asked.

"Damned monster accosted me right on my own moor," said the Hoka indignantly. "Drew a gun on me, he did. Forced me into this noisome hole. Had the unmitigated gall to take a mask of my face Since then he's kept me on bread and water. Not even fresh bread, by Godfrey! It — it isn't British! I've been tied up in this hole for weeks. The only exercise I got was harvesting his blinking weed for him. When he went away, he'd tie me up and gag me —" Sir Henry drew an outraged breath. "S'elp me, he gagged me *with*

my own school tie!"

"Kept as slave and, possibly, hostage," said Holmes. "Hm. Yes, we're dealing with a desperate fellow. But Watson, see here what I have to show you." He reached into a box and pulled out a limp black object with an air of triumph. "What do you think of this, Watson?"

Jones stretched it out. A plastimask of a fanged monstrous head, grinning like a toothpaste ad. When he held it in shadow, he saw the luminous spots on it. The Hound's head!

"Holmes!" he cried. "The Hound is the — the —"

"Ppussjan," supplied Holmes.

"How do you do?" said a new voice politely.

Whirling around, Holmes, Jones, Toowey, and Sir Henry managed, in the narrow space, to tie themselves in knots. When they had gotten untangled, they looked down the barrel of a raythrower. Behind it was a figure muffled shapelessly in a great trailing black coat, but with the head of Sir Henry above it.

"Number Ten!" gulped Jones.

"Exactly," said the ppussjan. His voice had a Hoka squeakiness, but the tone was cold. "Fortunately, I got back from scouting around before you could lay an ambush for me. It was pathetic, watching that search party. The last I saw of them, they were headed toward Northumberland."

"They'll find you," said Jones with a dry voice. "You don't dare hurt us."

"Don't I?" asked the ppussjan brightly.

"I zuppooze yeou du, at that," said Toowey.

Jones realized sickly that if the ppussjan's hideout had been good up to now, it would probably be good till his gang arrived to rescue him. In any case, he, Alexander Braithwaite Jones, wouldn't be around to see.

But that was impossible. Such things didn't happen to him. He was League plenipotentiary to Toka, not a character in some improbable melodrama, waiting to be shot. He —

A sudden wild thought, tossed out of his spinning brain: "Look here, Ten, if you ray us you'll sear all your equipment here too." He had to try again; no audible sounds had come out the first time.

"Why, thanks," said the ppussjan. "I'll set the gun to narrow-beam." Its muzzle never wavered as he adjusted the focusing stud. "Now," he asked, "have you any prayers to say?"

"I —" Toowey licked his lips. "Wull yeou alloo me tu zay one poem all t' way through? It have given me gree-at coomfort, it have."

"Go ahead, then "

"By the shores of Gitchee Gumee —"

Jones knelt too — and one long human leg reached out and his foot crashed down on Holmes' lantern. His own body followed, hugging the floor as total darkness whelmed the cave. The raybeam sizzled over him — but being narrow, missed and splatted the farther wall.

"Yoicks!" shouted Sir Henry, throwing himself at the invisible ppussjan. He tripped over Jones and went rolling to the floor. Jones got out from underneath, clutched at something, and slugged hard. The other slugged back.

"Take that!" roared Jones. "And that!"

"Oh, no!" said Sherlock Holmes in the darkness. "Not again, Watson!"

They whirled, colliding with each other, and groped toward the other sounds of fighting. Jones clutched at an arm. "Friend or ppussjan?" he bellowed.

A raybeam scorched by him for answer. He fell to the floor, grabbing for the ppussjan's skinny legs. Holmes climbed over him to attack the enemy. The ppussjan fired once more, wildly, then Holmes got his gun hand and clung. Farmer Toowey yelled a Hoka battle cry, whirled his staff over his head, and clubbed Sir Henry.

Holmes wrenched the ppussjan's raythrower loose. It clattered to the floor. The ppussjan twisted in Jones' grasp, pulling his leg free. Jones got hold of his coat. The ppussjan slipped out of it and went skidding across the floor, fumbling for the gun. Jones fought the heavy coat for some seconds before realizing that it was empty.

Holmes was there at the same time as Number Ten, snatching the raythrower from the ppussjan's grasp. Ten clawed out, caught a smooth solid object falling from Holmes' pocket, and snarled in triumph. Backing away, he collided with Jones. "Oops, sorry," said Jones, and went on groping around the floor.

The ppussjan found the light switch and snapped it. The radiance caught a tangle of three Hokas and one human. He pointed his weapon. "All right!" he screeched. "I've got you now!"

"Give that back!" said Holmes indignantly, drawing his revolver.

The ppussjan looked down at his own hand. It was clutching Sherlock Holmes' pipe.

Whitcomb Geoffrey staggered into The George and Dragon and grabbed the wall for support. He was gaunt and unshaven. His clothes were in rags. His hair was full of burrs. His shoes were full of mud. Every now and then he twitched, and his lips moved. A night and half a day trying to superintend a Hoka search party was too much for any man, even an IBI man.

Alexander Jones, Sherlock

..olmes, Farmer Toowey, and Sir enry Baskerville looked sympathetically up from the high tea which the landlord was serving them. The ppussjan looked up too, but not sympathetically. His vulpine face sported a large black eye, and his four-legged body was lashed to a chair with Sir Henry's old school tie. His wrists were bound with Sir Henry's regimental colors.

"I say, Gregson, you've had rather a thin time of it, haven't you?" asked Holmes. "Do come have a spot of tea."

"Whee-ar's the s'arch party, lad?" asked Farmer Toowey.

"When I left them," said Geoffrey dully, "they were resisting arrest at Potteringham Castle. The earl objected to their dragging his duckpond."

"Wull, wull, lad, they-all ull be back soon, laike," said Toowey gently.

Geoffrey's bloodshot eyes fell on Number Ten. He was too tired to say more than: "So you got him after all?"

"Oh, yes," said Jones. "Want to take him back to Headquarters?"

With the first real spirit he had shown today, Geoffrey sighed. "Take him back?" he breathed. "I can actually *leave* this planet?"

He collapsed into a chair. Sherlock Holmes refilled his pipe and leaned his short furry form back into his own seat.

"This has been an interesting little case," he said. "In some ways it reminds me of the Adventure of the Two Fried Eggs, and I think, my dear Watson, that it may be of some small value to your little chronicles. Have you your notebook ready? . . . Good. For your benefit, Gregson, I shall explain my deductions, for you are in many ways a promising lad who could profit by instruction."

Geoffrey's lips started moving again.

"I have already explained the discrepancies of Sir Henry's appearance in the tavern," went on Holmes implacably. "I also thought that the recent renewed activity of the Hound, which time-wise fitted in so well with the ppussjan's arrival, might well be traceable to our criminal. Indeed, he probably picked this hideout because it did have such a legend. If the natives were frightened of the Hound, you see, they would be less likely to venture abroad and interfere with Number Ten's nefarious activities; and anything they did notice would be attributed to the Hound and dismissed by those outsiders who did not take the superstition seriously. Sir Henry's disappearance was, of course, part of this program of terrorization; but also, the ppussjan needed a Hoka face. He would have to appear in the local villages from time to time, you see,

to purchase food and to find out whether or not he was being hunted by your bureau, Gregson. Watson has been good enough to explain to me the process by which your civilization can cast a mask in spray-plastic. The ppussjan's overcoat is an ingenious, adaptable garment; by a quick adjustment, it can be made to seem either like the body of a monster or, if he walks on his hind legs, the covering of a somewhat stout Hoka. Thus, the ppussjan could be himself, or Sir Henry Baskerville, or the Hound of the Baskervilles, just as it suited him."

"Clever fella," murmured Sir Henry. "But dashed impudent, don't y'know. That sort of thing just isn't done. It isn't playing the game."

"The ppussjan must have picked up a rumor about our descent," continued Holmes. "An aircraft makes quite a local sensation. He had to investigate and see if the flyers were after him and, if so, how hot they might be on his trail. He broke into the tavern in the Sir Henry disguise, learned enough for his purposes, and went out the window. Then he appeared again in the Hound form. This was an attempt to divert our attention from himself and send us scampering off after a non-existent Hound — as, indeed, Lestrade's search party was primarily doing when last heard from. When we pursued him that night, he tried to do away with the good Watson, but fortunately I drove him off in time. Thereafter he skulked about, spying on the search party, until finally he returned to his lair. But I was already there, waiting to trap him."

That, thought Jones, was glossing the facts a trifle. However —

Holmes elevated his black nose in the air and blew a huge cloud of nonchalant smoke. "And so," he said smugly, "ends the Adventure of the Misplaced Hound."

Jones looked at him. Damn it — the worst of this business was that Holmes was right. He'd been right all along. In his own Hoka fashion, he had done a truly magnificent job of detection. Honesty swept Jones off his feet and he spoke without thinking.

"Holmes — by God, Holmes," he said, "this — this is sheer genius!"

No sooner were the words out of his lips than he realized what he had done. But it was too late now — too late to avoid the answer that Holmes must inevitably give. Jones clutched his hands together and braced his tired body, resolved to see the thing through like a man. Sherlock Holmes smiled, took the pipe from between his teeth, and opened his mouth. Through a great, thundering mist, Alexander Jones heard THE WORDS.

"Not at all. *Elementary, my dear Watson!*"

Mr. Peavey's Tiger

By Holly Wolcott

Remember when you were a child, and you played with invisible playmates? Maybe it's something that could happen to a grown-up too . . . like Mr. Peavey.

Illustrated by Virgil Finlay

MR. PEAVEY had a tiger. This was rather unusual in several respects, not the least of which was that no one but Mr. Peavey had ever seen it. In the second place, Mr. Peavey was the last man in the world anyone would expect to have a tiger.

Of course, when he was a boy, he used to dream of having one. Then he'd ride on its back and they'd say, "There goes Peavey with his tiger," and not jump on him or push him in the face or sing out, "Peewee is a scairdy cat." It was true that he was smaller than the rest of the boys and he couldn't jump as far or fight as long but he could run fast and he wanted, so very hard, to be liked. When he found out that they didn't want him, he began to read books and dream about rescuing fair maidens from cruel fates while riding his tiger.

When he grew up, he was still smaller than anyone his age so he practiced being inconspicuous so that no one would notice him and push him around. At the office, he worked efficiently and quietly. Probably the girl who gave him his weekly salary check would not have recognized him outside since a bowler hat changes a man's looks. He lived in a furnished room in a boarding house near the lake and outside the reading, about the only time he felt anything resembling happiness was the hour he walked to the lake front and just looked at the water. Then a pure peace would flood his being and he rested in the beauty of nature.

It was in a moment like this the tiger turned up. Mr. Peavey became conscious that someone had stopped beside him. He thought to himself, "If I don't look maybe he'll go away."

A very deep, growly sort of voice spoke up then, "Nights like these make me think of that old Hindu poet who said,

The stars look down to touch the lake
And leave pieces of themselves for

mortals to admire.".

Mr. Peavey turned around then and saw the tiger. The night was so enchanting that he did not realize how remarkable it was that he should be talking to a tiger on the edge of Lake Michigan until sometime afterwards. Instead he said, "That's a very beautiful thought but not very poetically expressed."

The tiger seemed somewhat annoyed. He sniffed a little as he answered. "I didn't think you'd understand it at all if I said it in Hindustani but in that language it is exquisite." So he said it over again in Hindustani and Mr. Peavey had to admit it was much more beautiful. They talked for quite awhile about various things that had often been on Mr. Peavey's mind. He found the tiger to be a remarkably well read fellow and quite a philosopher in his own way.

Finally Mr. Peavey had to own he was cold. "It's been a pleasure meeting you." he said. "I'd like to know your name so that I can remember this night."

The tiger obliged but out of the long string of syllables, Peavey only got the part that went . . rajamuri . . so the tiger said rather smugly, "Call me Rajah, or Raj for short. I don't mind. How about spending your week end with me? I'd like to show you some fine scenery on the Dunes. We might even go in swimming."

Mr. Peavey didn't really expect anything like that would happen so he agreed to meet the tiger at the end of the rail line that went out to Highview on Saturday morning about ten and bring a lunch with him.

"What a remarkably superior sort of fellow that tiger is," he told himself on the way home. "If I thought he were real I might be a little annoyed by his condescending manner." It wasn't until he had got into bed that he began to realize just how amazing the whole thing had been but by then he was so tired he fell asleep.

Saturday came along and Mr. Peavey found himself getting up at six-thirty to make the sandwiches and coffee. He told himself that a picnic wasn't a bad idea but he quite frankly ignored the fact that he was packing more than enough for two people. He didn't really believe the tiger would be there but it gave a slight glow to the morning and he found the train ride more exhilarating than usual. He normally spent travel time with his head in a book. This time he kept watching the other people and wondering what they would say if he were to tell them about his conversation with a tiger.

He got off at Highview feeling surprisingly let down. Of course,

The tiger was leering at every beautiful girl that went by.

there wasn't any tiger out here among the sand scrub trees or open-faced wooden shed that acted as a waiting room for the train. He sat down for a moment while he made up his mind what to do.

"Well Peavey, I see you made it." The deep voice in his ear made him jump a good foot into the air. When he came down, Mr. Peavey looked around. The tiger sat grinning at him in the friendliest way and he really couldn't deny that it made him happy to see him. They exchanged greetings and then the tiger stood up and stretched his full length (which was considerable) and said, "Let's go."

Now Mr. Peavey hadn't been outdoors in the daytime for more years then he liked to remember. An accountant gets more familiar with electric light than sun light. On Saturdays, Mr. Peavey was used to reading all day or spending his time at the museums, which amounts to the same thing. The tiger set off at a pretty good clip, leaving Peavey to carry the basket of food. At first he enjoyed the parklike nature of the terrain. He hadn't known there were so many trees on the Dunes nor how pretty they could look on a summer day Then they started climbing what appeared to be small hills but half way up seemed to turn into small mountains. Peavey slipped and slid on the leaves of the trails, alternately drenched in sweat and gasping for breath at the few moments the tiger decided to stop for a moment. Pretty soon though he began to get angry. It was all very well for the tiger to run through the woods but it was too much for him to get to the top and then to say, "Really, I didn't think you'd be so out of condition, old man. Think you can make it over the next hill?"

That did it. Even if he had to crawl from now on, Mr. Peavey would not admit he was licked. His soul was not made for resentment, however, so when they surmounted the last hill and came to a place surrounded by trees and looking out over the intense blue of the lake, he flopped flat on his back and lay there waiting for his heart to quit shaking him to pieces. The tiger sat looking out over the water too and then smiled at Peavey. "That was a good show you put up back there. To tell you the truth, I was sort of trying you out. So many people look good at first sight but they give out on you when you put the pressure on."

Mr. Peavey felt a glow of intense happiness steal over him. He realized that this bit of admiration was the first he'd had in years. Suddenly he felt rested and sat up. They decided to stay where they were and he began to lay out the lunch. There

was some cold water in an iron pipe nearby and a couple of wooden benches with backs but when he sat down to eat the tiger wouldn't join him.

"Dear me, no," he said. "I had a good meal last night and I won't be hungry again until tomorrow."

"But how do you manage to get food?" Mr. Peavey asked with visions of the tiger slinking around behind houses to steal a bite whenever he could "From what you say, you're all alone in the world. And I always thought tigers ate meat."

The tiger smiled reminiscently and licked his lips as though tasting something over again. "Oh, I get along," he said. "There's always something around for someone with imagination and courage."

There was such a gleam in his eye that Mr. Peavey forbore to ask any more questions. As the afternoon wore on and they sat together peacefully looking at the lake and dozing, he found himself looking at the magnificent animal and wondering uneasily just what he had meant. He was so big, he'd have to eat a large amount and where would a tiger . . . who was alone in the world . . . get such an amount . . . of meat? Quickly he pulled his thoughts together. It wouldn't do any good to follow that line of reasoning. It wasn't any of his business anyway.

About four the tiger stirred again. "How about going down to the beach and having a dip?" he said as he bounded to his feet and stretched. He seemed to do a lot of stretching but evidently it agreed with him for he looked every inch what a tiger should be. Indeed, he was quite the most beautiful tiger Peavey had ever seen.

Mr. Peavey looked down the beach with the crowds of people running up and down and crying out to one another and covering up the sand. "Won't you cause something of a sensation down there?"

The tiger smiled. "No one will notice me. Most people only see the things they want or expect to and not anyone down there will admit to himself he really sees me so . . . they won't."

They slithered down the sandy foot path, Mr. Peavey clutching the wicker basket that now was light enough to carry easily. Once they got to the beach he saw that the tiger knew what he was talking about. No one paid any attention except a small boy who screamed, "Mamma, mamma, see the man with the tiger," but his mother slapped him hard for lying and no one else looked up.

They walked along looking for a place to sit down and presently Mr. Peavey noticed that the tiger

was leering at all the pretty girls who went by, paying special attention to their ankles. What's more, he began to make various comments on portions of female anatomy as they passed. Mr. Peavey was wretchedly unhappy. He himself, never noticed such things and the thought of what the girls would say if they could hear the tiger was embarrassing.

That wasn't the worst of it either. Pretty soon the tiger began nipping the prettiest heels that went by. Peavey tried to stop him but there was such a look of devilish amusement in the tiger's eye that he couldn't bring himself to do more than remonstrate. Suddenly a couple of them screamed and turned around. They looked straight into Mr. Peavey's eyes and when they saw his red face they immediately jumped to the conclusion that he had done it somehow. One of them opened her mouth to scream but before she could get her breath, Mr. Peavey was fifty yards down the beach. They found a place after that and he sat down with his head upon his knees. The tiger came up to him after awhile and said coaxingly, "Oh, come on, Peavey. It wasn't that bad." Then he saw that Peavey really felt awful and started to sing. The melody began to insinuate itself between Mr. Peavey and his embarrassed feelings after awhile and presently he was able to sit up and really listen. The tiger was singing it in Hindustani and it was a very beautiful thing.

"What does it mean?" he asked.

"It's a hymn to the beauty of women," the tiger explained, smugly. "I'll admit, Peavey, I was a little exhuberant awhile ago but that's all it was, just my way of expressing my admiration of beauty. And what is more beautiful than a beautiful woman?"

They were silent after that for a long time. The sun dropped lower and lower into the water and the noises of an afternoon beach crowd began to fade away. People started to leave. Families first, then single people and finally couples started to wander homeward arm in arm. They went in the lake a couple of times then and in the hush of evening, Peavey asked to learn the Hindustani song. He practiced it all the way back to the station which they reached by following the cement roadway that by-passed all the hills they had come over.

"It's been a wonderful day," he told the tiger while they waited for the train. "Won't you come home with me?"

But the tiger shook his head. "No, but I'll see you in a few days," and disappeared in the shadows behind the station at the approach of the headlights of the train.

Mr. Peavey spent the next

two days in agony. He had acquired a complete case of sunburn that made wearing the alpaca coat he used in the office an impossibility. He couldn't bear anything against his skin but the softest silk shirt he owned and so he did his work in unaccustomed nudity. For the first time since he had started to work, other members of the staff stopped at his desk to ask him how he was and comment on the magnificent condition of his burn. The boss's secretary said to her girl friend on their way to lunch, "You know, I would have sworn Peavey was sixty but he doesn't seem to be any more than thirty-five, if that. And not bad looking either."

As soon as he got over the sunburn, he and the tiger made a regular practice of the week-end trips and he slept out of doors more than once that summer and fall. He got brown and hard and began eating again. He got his hair cut short because it got in his way and somewhere along about October he began to learn to speak Hindustani. It was a beautiful language when the tiger spoke it and the condescension of his attitude toward ignorance of the classics in that tongue finally stirred Mr. Peavey into going out to the University of Chicago and arranging for lessons. He even stopped reading novels for books on travel and geography. The tiger had been everywhere and wasn't at all reluctant to display how much he knew and Mr. Peavey didn't like being outdone.

Mr. Peavey brought the tiger down to the office one day when most everyone was gone. In spite of knowing by now that no one would notice, he kept feeling there would be some kind of disaster. Nothing happened unless you could call the complete disdain the tiger showed toward the whole thing a disaster.

He prowled around among the desks, switching his tail impatiently at the narrow spaces and stuffy air "How can you bear to shut yourself up in four walls and do the same thing over and over?" he demanded. "It reminds me of the time the Sultan of . . ." and he was off on one of his interminable tales that always fascinated Mr. Peavey but also managed to put the tiger in the most favorable light.

Mr. Peavey began defending his job as furiously as though he hadn't begun to doubt its value himself. "The story of the world's commerce is told in these figures." He copied the tiger's own tones and got a sort of sneaking enjoyment out of seeing the tiger wince a bit.

"Do you know your stuff?" the tiger asked point-blank. Mr. Peavey, who was picking up some of his directness answered, "Yes." He forgot about this however,

when they went to visit the tiger's uncle who was living at the Lincoln Park Zoo.

"I go out there now and then to see the old boy. He gets a hankering to talk a bit with someone who understands him though he's happy enough on the whole," the tiger explained. "Bit of a bore though."

Mr. Peavey was impressed by the magnificence of the tawny color and the coppery eyes though he still preferred his own tiger, if only for sentimental reasons. Raj wandered off somewhere after introducing them, leaving Mr. Peavey standing before the cage somewhat at a loss for words. He needn't have worried. The tiger's uncle seemed to like the sound of his own voice. The upshot of it was that they had quite an interesting conversation about the conditions in the hills of India, which were the best rivers for hunting and other matters that had always made Mr. Peavey curious. He didn't notice anyone else until he started to scratch the place the tiger itched, just behind his left shoulder blade. He had to reach through the bars of the cage to do this and the tiger just purred with satisfaction.

There was an "Ah!" of amazement and Mr. Peavey woke up to the fact that he collected an audience composed of a dozen children with their mouths and their eyes wide open, the white faced Zoo keeper and a couple of young men wearing raincoats and carrying cameras. They all seemed very impressed by Mr. Peavey's bravery.

The Zoo keeper alternated between anger and admiration. "I never saw anyone get within six feet of that brute before. What's your secret?" he kept asking.

Mr. Peavey knew better than to tell them he'd been scratching the tiger's back because he asked him to, so he told them he spoke Hindustani and most animals liked him. They took a couple of pictures and interviewed him right then and there before Mr. Peavey remembered he had lost Raj somewhere. He told them he had to meet a friend and went off to find the tiger.

Raj was resting by the front entrance. He seemed preoccupied but when Mr. Peavey told him about the photographers, he said, "It's always good to have the press on your side. Cordial relations and all that. You never know when they'll come in handy." They went home for a snack after that. While they were sitting on the bed together, talking about women (which Mr. Peavey had learned to do) he looked at the magnificent length and breadth of his friend and sighed.

"What's the matter with you, my young friend?" The tiger raised his eyebrows gently.

"Oh, how I wish I could be a

tiger too," Mr. Peavey said from the bottom of his heart.

The tiger smiled the warmest, most beautiful expression he'd ever seen. "You know, Peavey," he said. "That's what I like about you. You have the capacity for big ideas. That's why I don't understand why you don't put them into practice."

Mr. Peavey said, "Huh?" but he knew very well what the tiger meant. All this talk about women and no real woman in his life. All this talk about travel and he'd never been outside the state of Illinois. Oh, he knew very well what the tiger meant.

Instead of answering, the tiger got up and went to the window which he used for a door most of the time in order to avoid the landlady. "I have to make a trip out of town for a few days," he informed Peavey. "I'll look you up when I get back." Then, with a single fluid motion, he was through the window and out of sight.

Mr. Peavey missed Raj at first, but as the days went by he began looking over the girls he knew with the view to asking one of them for a date. He finally picked on the Boss's secretary and they went dancing. But in spite of her pretty ankles, she didn't speak Hindustani and didn't seem to be particularly interested in strange countries or in tigers. He tried one after the other of the ones he knew and had begun to keep an eye out wherever he went for the girl who might fill his specifications before he realized that Raj had been gone for a long time.

He was walking down Michigan Avenue one March day when he heard the sound of people screaming in front of the Art Institute. A year ago he would have glanced over briefly to see where the disturbance was and crossed the street to keep out of the crowd. Now he moved quickly toward the center of the greatest noise. It was a bright day, sun shining and a false note of spring in the air. Even the screams had a note of brightness in them. He pushed and squeezed between shoulders and elbows. When he got to the front lines, he discovered a young woman with the prettiest ankles he had ever noticed standing up on the ledge with the Art Institute lion, holding a little boy behind her and staring at his tiger who was pacing back and forth in front of them, switching his tail and making growling noises in the back of his throat.

"Raj," Mr. Peavey called out but his voice was drowned by the voices around him. Now that he could see, the whole thing had a sort of comic opera air since obviously Raj didn't mean anything. Then he realized that for

the first time, other people were seeing his tiger too. He had just a minute to notice this before he was recognized by the two bright young photographers who had taken his picture at the Zoo.

"Hey," they shouted. "Here's the man to do something about this. He knows all about tigers. Even talks their language." They took his arms and hustled him across the cleared space the crowd was keeping between themselves and the tiger. There was a policeman who was alternately saying "Hail Marys" under his breath and swearing at the crowd. About every so often he would pick up his whistle and sent out a blast that made the tiger growl even worse.

"Let Peavey try to get the tiger away from the girl," the reporters said to the policeman. So Mr. Peavey, in a dead hush, walked slowly up to his tiger. At first, he didn't think Raj recognized him but when he got up close, the tiger winked one eye in his direction.

"How am I doing, kid?" he muttered out of the side of his mouth.

"In heaven's name, what's going on?" Mr. Peavey pleaded.

"Oh, I happened to run across just the girl for you. She speaks Hindustani, she's been to India and a lot of other places, so when I saw you coming down the street, I treed her for you."

Mr. Peavey looked up at the girl and she did look beautiful And brave too since she was protecting the child from what she obviously thought was a horrible fate. He smiled at her and she risked a tentative grin in his direction. He looked at the tiger again

"How come everyone can see you today?"

The tiger was having trouble keeping up his pose of being an angry tiger. He was feeling proud of himself and didn't care if Peavey saw it. "Oh, once in awhile I scare somebody and then they see me. Then everyone else can see me too."

Right then, Mr Peavey became aware that the crowd had been pulled away and while he'd been talking, in Hindustani incidentally, the police reserves had come. There were a dozen or more blue-clad policemen with riot guns and big sticks creeping up the steps to where he stood. Mr. Peavey had a moment to realize that the tiger might really be in danger before there was a single burst of sound from a machine gun and he felt, rather than heard it hit Raj. He made a dive for his tiger but it was too late. Raj sighed and sank down on the cement steps. Mr. Peavey dropped on his knees and reached out to touch Raj but there was surging forward of the crowd and before he knew what had

happened, many hands had hauled him away. There were a lot of voices, strange faces, flashlights popping and he couldn't see what had happened to Raj. No one paid the least attention to anything he said, until he was ready to weep with rage and frustration.

Suddenly he found himself being embraced by two young arms and a delightful bundle of femininity was kissing him. "You wonderful man," she cried. Then this girl, who was presumably thanking him for saving her life, was whispering in his ear. "Don't be afraid. I heard you talking to the tiger so I know you were friends. He got away." Then she was hugging him again for the benefit of the cameras.

He had to listen a couple more hours to the policeman saying, "I know we shot the tiger, see, there's blood on the cement. But how can he have disappeared?" And to the reporters who insisted on prying into his taste in socks and literature and to everyone else who had been there and wanted to shake his hand. Finally he managed to get away by taking the girl home with him.

She was sensible about everything. She kept saying over and over again, "He'll probably be waiting at home for you." And sure enough, when he ran into his room, Raj was lying on the bed, licking his leg and acting remarkably nonchalant about the whole thing.

"Quite a hassle out there, wasn't it?" he said.

Peavey had had enough. He swore in English and in Hindustani for some time and finally simmered down long enough to say, "I'm glad you weren't really hurt."

"The bullet hasn't been made yet that can kill me," the tiger quit licking his leg and got up lazily. "By the way, when I was in New York last week. I mentioned you to some friends of mine and they tell me they can use a man like you who knows India, Hindustani and figures. I'll give you the number and you can call them tomorrow sometime. You'll have to give up your job and travel." He actually stopped talking for a moment. Mr. Peavey wasn't paying much attention. The girl was really so pretty and was so much more interested in Mr. Peavey than the tiger that he couldn't take his eyes off her.

The tiger kind of purred to himself. Then he slipped out of the window and stuck his head back in with a definite leer on his face. "I have a previous engagement for the evening. Sorry I can't stay with you any longer. I'll see you tomorrow."

But neither Mr. Peavey nor the girl heard him or saw him go. Mr. Peavey had graduated from tigers.

SEASONED TRAVELER

By F. L. WALLACE

Illustrated by Donald Mills

Emdee was the colony doctor, and he was also a robot. To be a doctor he had to know more than the average human — and knowledge is power! Into his metal mind crept a plan . . . and every man on Mars trembled. What fate confronted them, and how could they avoid it? The answer was simple — there was no way — but death!

I NEVER did like the calender," said Berini unemotionally, looking over the frozen tundra. In six months or so, as if months had any meaning on Mars, the sun would swing northward enough to melt it into mush. Only during the day, though; nights it would freeze again. "Tomorrow will be the Fourth," he added.

"What's the fourth?" asked Emdee.

It was difficult to explain, in spite of the fact that Emdee was the best money could buy. Better, really; there'd never be another quite like him. Processes of manufacture couldn't be controlled that close.

Even a round ball, the simplest object man could make since it had only one surface and one measurement, diameter; even that was subject to variations of sphericity and surface roughness. Not much that could be seen perhaps, but it made a difference as to how well it functioned in a bearing.

And when it came to more complex products, those differences were infinitely extended. The variations could cancel out, leaving an average product, or subtract to a substandard one. More rarely the differences added up to a superlative creation; the last was true when Emdee was made.

But it wasn't easy to explain. "It's a date," said Berini. "The next day after the third of July. It's a holiday in America."

It was more than that, though he didn't say so. Not just the fireworks, warm nights and warmer days, and the picnic by the river. It was a way of living in an intricate culture and reacting to it. But there was no way Berini could say that to a robot.

"July," said Emdee. "America. Then it's in the summer."

"That's right," said Berini, kicking at the frozen ground. "The good old summertime."

"But if you were in the southern hemisphere it would be winter on Earth," said Emdee. "Even so, wouldn't you feel like celebrating?"

"Maybe I would, and maybe I wouldn't," said Berini. "At least it's always in the same season, winter in South, during the summer in North America." He faced the valley that resembled, if anything, a plowed and frozen red boil. "But on Mars it slips around. How are the kids going to know where the Fourth belongs?"

"You're referring to the Martian year, 1.88089 years; about 686 earth days, plus or minus," said Emdee. "I see your point. A given holiday does tend to become displaced with respect to the seasons."

Emdee had facts, more than most humans. Included in his knowledge was a sound grasp of

psychology. Culture he didn't have because he had no use for it.

"Sure," said Berini. "This Fourth of July falls in the winter. The next one in the summer. How can anyone keep it straight?"

"It seems to me the Martian calendar we've adopted is a practical one," observed Emdee. "The year is divided as equally as it can be into four parts or months, corresponding to the seasons. Why not accept that as the unit? Space your holidays the way they occurred on earth, with the same relative interval between them. That way there'll only be one Fourth of July and it will always fall in the summer."

"Nuts," said Berini. "I can pick up a broadcast from earth and hear them celebrating the new year. Am I going to wait maybe twenty months to do the same just because I'm living on Mars? Uh-uh." He shivered, the hotsuit hanging awkwardly on him. A misplaced propagandist had named it, since it didn't keep him hot nor even warm. He didn't freeze in it though, and that was all anyone could expect during the Martian winter.

"Mars is a challenge," said Emdee. "If compromises are necessary, you ought to be willing to make them."

"To you it's a challenge. To me it's just another job, not the best I've had either." Berini was silent. "It wouldn't be so bad, but nothing's the same here."

It was possible Emdee didn't listen. Again he may have listened while concentrating on something else. He had either faculty, as required. "Look," he said, pointing to the base of the cliff at the far side of the valley.

Berini looked; he had good eyes and could see the opening of the mine shaft, but that was all.

Better eyes than his were observing it. "An accident," said Emdee. "They need me." Running, Emdee wasn't graceful; neither was he slow. Lagging far behind, Berini followed.

They brought Gardaza out last, and that was too late. It would have been the same if they had reached him first, but it seemed worse because it was easy to imagine that a few minutes might have made a vital difference. Emdee could have told them otherwise, but he didn't.

Gardaza had no business in the mine really. He had a job, an important one, but the work to be done had increased beyond the available man and robot hours. Gardaza had volunteered, and when the mine shaft crumpled, it crumpled on him.

Emdee listened without a stethescope. He had been built for just such work, and due consideration had been given to all the details of his construction. His face was grave, as it always was

He bent over the man lying on the floor of the shaft opening, peering at and through him, and, at the same time, administering a plasma injection from the supplies stored within his barrel-like body. Simultaneously he bound external wounds and applied local anesthetics. The blood flow staunched, he set the most dangerous broken bones in unbelievable time, two or three at once. His multiplicity of arms flashed with a speed and precision several human doctors working together could not match.

He straightened up and retracted the specialized extensions into his body, leaving only the normal number of arms visible.

"Is it bad?" asked Berini. Work robots stood uneasily at one side of the shaft. Some of them had been disabled in the same accident, but there was nothing anyone could do for them at present.

"He'll live, I think."

Berini smiled; Gardaza was safe.

"Internal injuries in the thoracic region; a punctured lung, but that won't kill him." Emdee summed it up professionally. "Worse are the skull fractures. They may have damaged optic nerves. My Xray equipment is not good enough to determine that. Later I can give you more information."

The Xray equipment Emdee talked about wasn't bad, considering it went wherever he did.

"What about his hands?" asked Berini.

"I'll try to save them. If I can't, there are always replacements. In that event he'll have to wait until he gets back to earth."

That was anything but good. They needed Gardaza nearly as much as they needed Emdee and for much the same reason. A healthy Gardaza, not a cripple.

Men were coming across the valley, summoned from the settlement by the alarm. The terrain was anything but smooth, however, and they were making poor time.

Characteristically, Emdee didn't wait. He located a spare hotsuit somewhere in the mine and deftly pulled it on the unconscious man. Then, extending all his arms, specialized or not, he slid them gently under Gardaza. He lifted him without effort and trotted swiftly across the wasteland toward the settlement.

Doctor, a rudimentary hospital, portable pharmacy, and if necessary, an ambulance.

Berini took charge of the disorganized robots, directing them to clear away the debris and remove their injured. This year the fireworks had come before the Fourth.

"I'm in favor of asking for a replacement now," said Lindon.

"Fine," said Berini. "How's he going to get here?"

"I know it will take eight or ten months," said Lindon reflectively. "Still, I'm in favor of getting it on record. Any day the sun's due to ruin our communication. I've had trouble getting the last few messages through."

Berini hadn't thought about that, though he knew about it. Normally it was hard enough to communicate, but when earth and Mars were on opposite sides of the sun, it was impossible. The magnetic forces of the sun were tremendous and extended far out into space. "Can't we bounce a radar beam off Jupiter?" he asked. "They ought to be able to pick that up."

It had been done, once, as an experiment. Radar could be relayed from Mars to earth via a third planet more or less at right angles to both. And the logical planet, in terms of nearness and size, was Jupiter. Whether anyone on earth would think to turn the equipment in the right direction was another question.

Lindon leaned against the transmitter. "We can try it," he said. "We've got to try it. They'll have to use big stuff to pick up our signal, and naturally they're not going to tie it up just for us.

"However, we can arrange a time to transmit, maybe an hour or so each month. They ought to agree to that." Lindon sat down and tried to reach earth. The static from the sun was overwhelming, but he did manage to punch through.

As an idea it was probably no worse than any other, thought Berini. At least it gave them the illusion that they were in touch and could summon help whenever they needed it. Actually replacements couldn't be sent to Mars until the two planets were quite close together, eight to ten months from now.

Lindon was scared though he tried not to show it; Berini knew the signs. It was all right as long as he kept it in the administrative circle. And that circle was smaller than it had been. Lindon: communication and human labor; and himself, Berini: police. There had been another member, Gardaza: robot labor and technical. But he was in no shape to attend and wouldn't be any help if he did. A small group, but all that were needed for twenty families. *And* a hundred robots. One hundred and one if you counted Emdee.

The confirmation from earth finally came through. They were assigned two hours each month for radar communication.

"Now what?" said Berini. They had been through this several times since Gardaza had been injured. So far they hadn't reached an agreement, and it was time they did.

"Wait and see," said Lindon.

"How can we? Someone's got

to repair the robots and Gardaza can't." The point needed no argument; without someone to make countless minor adjustments, the robot force would disintegrate. As it was, the robots that had been disabled in the same accident with Gardaza had never been repaired. And the others were growing less efficient

The little settlement was the only one on Mars Robots, aside from the work in the mine, also had to tend the atomic generator; they could and men couldn't. Without that generator human members of the community would have difficulty in surviving.

"Maybe something will turn up," said Lindon optimistically. The optimism was false; if pressed, he would admit it.

"As far as I'm concerned, there's only one person who can take Gardaza's place.' said Berini bluntly.

"Person?" Lindon twisted his face wryly

"A person," repeated Berini. "I can't call him anything else."

"He's good," said Lindon uncomfortably. "He's given us the kind of medical care we'd expect to find only on earth. But that doesn't alter it: he's not a person."

"Who can we get?" asked Berini. "A robot's partly mechanical, and some of us could be trained to repair that. But that leaves the rest of it, the synthetic brain and nervous system.

"First class surgery. Are you going to volunteer to dig into that brain and leave it in working condition? I don't want to try it."

"That's not the issue,' said Lindon, making an effort to be objective. "Emdee is a robot, and no robot has ever been allowed to repair another or learn the details of construction. The reason for that rule is obvious and I don't intend to violate it."

"But we're isolated and this is an emergency condition."

"Precisely," answered Lindon. 'We are isolated. If this were earth, a misadjusted robot could be tracked down and eliminated. But what can we do here? We're outnumbered, you know."

It wasn't simple; decisions seldom were. Nearly immune to extremes of temperature, and radiation proof, if robots ever decided they'd do better on their own, it would be hard to get them back. Mars wasn't the size of earth, but the land mass was larger and there were enough places for determined robots to hide out.

It would be a hundred years before Mars was settled, even at optimum development. With robots to offer an effective opposition, maybe it never would be.

But that reasoning left out a basic fact: Emdee. True, he had been given extra intelligence; as a doctor he'd be worthless without it. And a slip of the process

had made his mind better than anyone on earth knew.

But intelligence didn't signify he was dangerous, and every aspect of his personality that Berini had experienced argued the other way. Still —.

His thoughts were interrupted; outside someone was coming. The air was thin, but frozen ground crackled, and at night, in the absence of other noise, the sound carried a considerable distance.

They both sat there, tense and waiting. Their meetings were supposed to be free from interference. If the arrival of another person meant anything, it meant trouble. And that they didn't want; they had enough.

The door opened and Gardaza came in. Tension dissipated instantly. He shouldn't have attended, but the fact that he was there was an indication that his recovery was well advanced.

He peeled off the hotsuit and felt for a chair. He sat down contentedly and looked around. Possibly he could distinguish between the light at the far end of the room and the one directly overhead, decided Berini. Ten percent vision in one eye and none in the other.

"What's on the agenda?" asked Gardaza, attempting to be crisp and businesslike. He sounded weak.

They glanced at each other; no point in imposing their burdens on him.

"Minor matters," said Lindon. "They're all settled. We were ready to adjourn."

"Go ahead, adjourn." The strength of Gardaza's personality was still there, though it hadn't had time to resettle comfortably in his injured body. He sighed. "It's good to be back. If it hadn't been for Emdee, I wouldn't be."

"I guess he did a good job," said Lindon.

"What do you mean, you guess?" said Gardaza, laughing, yet belligerent. "He did as well as anyone could. What more can you ask?"

Berini shook his head, but Lindon didn't notice. "Nothing, I suppose, but it's curious about your hands. It was several weeks before he amputated, you know. If he kept them that long, why couldn't he save them permanently?"

"He was hoping for a miracle," said Gardaza, definitely not friendly. "And when it didn't happen, he had to cut. At that he saved two fingers." Those two fingers fumbled nervously for a cigarette. Berini produced a light for him.

"I'm sure you're right," said Berini soothingly. "You'll be in fine shape."

"I am in fine shape," said Gardaza. "Six months after I get back to earth I'll be playing tennis and leering at pretty girls, be-

cause Emdee kept me in shape for restorative surgery. And if there were eye and limb banks on Mars, he'd operate for that too."

Berini stood up. Better cut it short before they got involved. "It's nice to have you back, Gardaza. But I see no reason to keep you up all night. Let's adjourn."

"Wait for my report," said Gardaza. "Why do you suppose I came? Just to show you I can walk?"

They stared at him. He had nothing to report. Until a few days ago he had been confined to the tiny three-bed hospital two beds vacant.

Gardaza inhaled and snuffed the last of the cigarette out. "I was worried about my job," he said. "We all know there's only one person who can take over."

"Have you discussed this with Emdee?" asked Lindon hurriedly. "If not, it might be well not to bring it up for a time."

"You kiddin'?" asked Gardaza. "Couple of weeks ago, when I saw I wasn't going to make it, I started teaching Emdee. Verbally, of course; there wasn't any other way I could do it.

"Anyway, he catches on fast, because of his past training. Right now I'd say he knows as much as I do. And before he's done, he'll know a lot more."

Gardaza yawned. "So you see, there's nothing to worry about. You've got a robot technician, better than the one you lost." He stood up and said cheerfully: "Let's go home."

The meeting adjourned.

Months passed; the effective Martian winter was nearly an earth year long, and it was cold. For the sake of the children, and there were fourteen, two born on Mars, holidays were properly observed. The settlers clung to their customs, grim weather of Mars notwithstanding. They didn't come to Mars to give into it.

Everything proceeded according to plan or faster. Emdee took the new job in stride. Except for minor accidents, all the humans were healthy. And the work robots were generally in good condition, better than when they had been delivered from the factory, according to Gardaza.

Berini wondered whether it was true; so did Lindon. By mutual agreement they kept those doubts to themselves. The damage if it was that, had been done and there was no way to undo it. Neither was there any point in spreading alarm.

Emdee was close to the community, perhaps too close. He enjoyed their confidence as a doctor and any suspicions imparted to the rank and file might get back to him. They were good people, all of them, but they didn't always understand the issues.

It was Lindon who first dis-

covered the deviation. Berini was skirting a desolate ravine between the settlement and the mine when Lindon came up to him. "You might be interested in this," he said, glancing behind. There was no one near. He handed Berini the work sheet for the previous day.

Berini scanned it; the statistics were simple. Total working force: one hundred robots. Number in working condition: one hundred. Number working on generator and mine: ninety-five. Number assigned to special duty: five.

Berini handed it back. "I'd say it's good," he commented. "We've seldom have ninety-five percent working."

Lindon looked at him, and he knew he'd missed the point. "It's good," agreed Lindon dryly. "But up to now I've always been asked about special assignments."

Berini rejected the obvious explanations. Emdee knew as well as anyone that Lindon was the actual head of the community and the important decisions were his to make. And five work days could account for a lot of progress, or lack of it. "What's the special assignment?" he asked.

"Emdee sent them to make an accurate survey of the rim of the valley. He said he had an idea about covering the whole valley with one way plastic sheeting. Let sunlight in, but keep heat from escaping."

"Sounds a little wild to me," said Berini, struggling up the slope.

"Oh it's feasible," said Lindon; stopping, not because of the steepness of the slope. "That's why we picked this valley. Less work to do it here than any place on Mars. Someday, when we've got a bigger population, we'll tackle it. Just now it can't be done and it doesn't take an engineer to see it." Again Lindon looked around.

"In other words, Emdee knew it too," said Berini. "Then why did he send them out?"

"That's your problem," said Lindon. "Find out. Do whatever you have to, but keep it to yourself. Emdee said they'd be gone a week." He turned and went back toward the mine.

Berini continued on. It might mean something and it might not. Lindon thought it did, and not just because some of the authority over the robots had slipped through his fingers. And whoever controlled the robots controlled the life of the community.

But Emdee didn't need that; he already had every life in his hands. He was a good enough doctor to wipe them out overnight with disease. He hadn't done so because first of all he was a doctor.

The men who had organized the expedition had known the power Emdee would have, and still they had sent him. He had

the knowledge of half a dozen specialists; no two humans plus additional equipment could take his place. It wasn't an accident that a robot had been given the task of keeping humans healthy and a human technician assigned to the robots.

On the other hand, the balance had now been upset. Berini kept thinking about it. The men who had organized the expedition hadn't been worried about Emdee. *But their lives weren't involved.*

And certainly Emdee wasn't stupid enough to waste five robots for one week on a project that wouldn't pay off for years, if it ever did.

Berini reached the assembly hall, largest building on Mars. From the outside it didn't look like much, most of it beneath the ground as protection against the cold. Among other things it housed the government of Mars. And he was the police force of that government, and the head of the army if they had to have one.

He went into the room in which the records were kept. Births, deaths, though so far there hadn't been any of the last, and more important at the moment, the complete inventory of the settlement. Hours later he gave it up as a bad job.

How much metal and explosives did it take to extend the mine shaft? And how much building material had gone into the settlement? That depended on who used it and how. The records were not accurate enough to determine what equipment the five robots had taken with them. If he knew what they had, he could guess what they went for.

That left him the option of checking the actual supplies on hand. He rejected that for the same reason. It would tell him nothing.

That did not mean there was no way of learning. He went into his own tiny office, which was more important than the size of it indicated. It was their arsenal, a small one, but then it was a small community.

Berini selected a weapon, small and easily concealed. A work robot was larger and stronger than a man, but the little sparkler that he took would stop it.

He closed the door of the office behind him. At the far end of the assembly children were laughing and playing. That was another function of the building, especially necessary during the long Martian winter.

Emdee strode into the circle and the game broke up. He lifted a child effortlessly and sat him on his shoulder. The child squealed with delight and whispered into his ear. Others begged for an equal opportunity.

Berini went home. Emdee was popular, no doubt of it. It was not for him to decide whether

it was natural or the result of deliberate effort.

At home he was casual and discussed the minor happenings of the day with his wife. He brought up the subject of decorations, and after some discussion, volunteered to spend a few days looking for Martian plants that might be suitable. His offer was accepted.

He did not sleep well that night. He had five days in which to find the robots, and a wilderness in which to look.

Each day Berini went out into the wasteland. It was a slight chance, but the only one he had. With a helicopter he could have located them easily, but the settlement had none and wouldn't have for years. He searched on foot through the desolate, eroded valley.

Ostensibly that was not his purpose, of course, and he was careful to come home each evening with a load of small and gnarled shrubs. If Emdee noted his sudden interest in the wasteland, that was his camouflage, and it was as good as any. Above all he had to avoid suspicion and he had to get to the robots before Emdee did.

He found traces where they had been, but until the evening of the fourth day he didn't make contact. That evening, a large but light bundle of shrubs strapped to his back, he saw them in the distance, moving down a dry watercourse.

His first impulse was to call to them. His second was to get closer before he did. The second was more realistic, so he obeyed it.

He froze in his tracks and watched them, only their heads visible above the jumble of rocks. At least two and perhaps more, he couldn't be sure in the uncertain light. He could risk a shot, but a sparkler wound in the head and that robot would give no one any information. And after that the others would run.

Once they were out of sight and he was free to move without detection, he started after them. The pack on his back hampered him, but he couldn't take time to remove it. He raced against the fading light down the twisting canyon. His chance was to come on them suddenly around a bend. If they tried to escape he could burn their legs from under them. One was all he needed.

He could not or did not gain on them. The dry watercourse ended on an open plain and they were not in sight. Across the plain he could see the lights of the settlement twinkling on. It was dark.

To the left a rock rattled down a slope. He flashed a light over it, but anything that was there stayed well hidden. He called out, but only echoes answered.

At that point he abandoned the

search; he still had the next day. Puzzling, but not conclusive proof of anything. They might have turned aside at several places he had failed to observe in the twilight.

At the settlement he unloaded the shrubs. Perhaps they were dismayed at the material he brought, but the women promtply accepted the challenge and went to work on the nondescript plants with sprays, dyes, and imagination.

Lindon was waiting for him. Berini sat down and gave a detailed account.

"They're your eyes," commented Lindon. "I'll assume you saw at least two robots out there, *this evening*."

Berini shrugged. "I did."

"Yet the survey party came in *this morning*, shortly after you checked out."

Berini looked at him. "All of them."

"Right the first time," said Lindon with gloomy satisfaction. "Only two came back. The report I have is that the other three were buried under a landslide."

Sure, he could see it. It was a good way of getting robots out of the settlement, so they wouldn't have to be accounted for. And worse, there was nothing they could say about it. Emdee could point out that, even with three lost, the settlement still had more functioning robots than at any comparable time. It was those three, supposedly buried, that he had encountered in the wasteland.

"Will it do any good to question the two who came back?"

"Not at all. Emdee had cleared their memories, getting them in shape for routine work, he said. I couldn't even be sure I was questioning the same two that had gone out."

Emdee had them, very neatly, and whatever his purpose was, by now it was covered up.

"What's he trying to do?" asked Berini. He had his own ideas, but he didn't like to look squarely at them.

"We've got to be logical," said Lindon. "We've got to face the fact that in five days we'all all be relaxed and least suspicious."

"I can't believe it," he said slowly. And yet he did; he'd been thinking along the same lines.

"Why not?" asked Lindon. "What does Christmas mean to a robot? Nothing more than an opportunity to get rid of us. We'll be together, not expecting anything. And the three robots probably have enough explosives to atomize the settlement."

Berini let go the breath he'd been holding in. From now in it was his job, the protection of the community. No matter what he did it wouldn't be good. He could thwart the attack. Emdee had picked the right time, but he hadn't counted on their learning

his intentions.

After that — they'd take their chances. He himself would dig into Emdee's brain with a spoon, if he had to, attempting to straighten him out. And if that didn't work and they had no doctor left, they'd face the startling incidence of disease and accidents without one. Some would come through.

"Pick out eight other men," said Berini. "The most reliable ones. Send them to me, one at a time. I'll arm them and show them how to use their weapons." A total of ten armed men and against them a hundred robots, three of which were free to strike at any moment.

Lindon nodded, relieved that the decision was out of his hands, though he'd been instrumental in forming it. "There's another precaution," he said. "I've got spare parts and can rig up a radio transmitter. You can bury it in the wasteland, where no one will find it. I'll set it to begin transmitting in three or four months; at that time the message will get through."

That too. The next expedition shouldn't make the mistakes this one had. They still had radar, but the scheduled communication with earth was two weeks away. When that time came, there might be no human left to operate. Emdee had laid his plans deep.

Berini selected a weapon and handed it to Lindon, who examined it curiously and thrust it in his pocket. Little, but size wasn't the measure of destructiveness. Berini locked up the remainder. At least Emdee hadn't tried for these. Caution, no doubt. Missing weapons would give his plans away.

"Maybe we shouldn't wait," suggested Lindon, bolder now that he had something to be aggressive with. "Let's take Emdee now."

Berini indicated with his hand. "There are three robots out there. They'll follow orders no matter what we do. Until we can take them all we'll have to wait."

They went out into the assembly hall. Children were playing noisily. Emdee wasn't with them, but he had just left. The extra enthusiasm in their voices and the secret smiles that passed between them could have only one source.

Lindon stopped to watch; he had a kid.

Berini went on; he had no child and that was something to be thankful for. He and his wife had talked about it and decided to wait. It was good they had.

The space on rocket ships was limited, but the needs of a community like this weren't. So many things to bring, mining equipment, food, prefab housing, clothes, and all the necessary mis-

cellaneous supplies. An intangible thing had got crowded out. No room for such gay and useless things as presents; children needed vitamins and warm clothing.

They did, but with only that, something was missing, an identification with the rest of mankind. Custom was sometimes foolish, but it was that link.

Berini walked along the frozen path to the tiny structure where he lived. Nice Christmas for kids.

Lindon came up to him, pocket bulging. "Get it out of sight," said Berini.

"Who's going to notice?" asked Lindon. Nevertheless he adjusted the weapon flat and buttoned the flap over it. "Emdee's disappeared."

Berini growled. "You were supposed to keep track of him."

"How could I?" said Lindon, indicating the confusion.

It would have been difficult, even for an experienced man. The assembly hall was decorated up to the light metal cross beams. The shrubs Berini had gathered now miraculously appeared as Christmas trees, festooned with confections and lights strung over them. The women had done a good job with scanty material.

Kids ran from one tree to another and exclaimed over the mysterious packages on them, packages of clothing and visually reconstituted fruit that tasted like the dehydrated pulp from which they had been made. Women smiled and let them romp.

Only a few knew the real situation, and those men who did attempted to keep the strain from showing on their faces while they quietly occupied strategic positions near the doorways. All the help they were going to get was ready, and though Emdee had eluded them, he didn't know that they were prepared.

"Got any idea where he is?" asked Berini.

"Not in the assembly hall. As soon as I missed him I looked."

Berini gave orders and quietly slipped into a hotsuit and went outside. Emdee was near, that was certain, as certain as the evidence that he had organized the conspiracy. Find him and the center of the plot was uncovered.

He wasn't inside, and that meant he had to be outside. Only one thing he could be waiting for, the arrival of the three robots that he, Berini, had encountered that evening in the wasteland. That had something to do with it. Just what Berini wasn't sure.

He fingered the sparkler. It would take care of a work robot, but would it be effective against Emdee?

The medical robot wasn't tall, five ten or so, but he was massive and he weighed fifteen hundred pounds. A great barrel-shaped body and he needed every cubic

inch of it to house the multitude of medical functions. A direct hit might not stop him and his momentum was enough to crush a man.

Sparkler in hand Berini slipped around the corner of the assembly hall. Except for himself, all humans were inside. One crude bomb and they were done for. It was dangerous, but he hadn't counted on Emdee getting out, and any other course would have aroused suspicion. Now it was up to him.

As quietly as he could, Berini circled the building. Faint sounds came through the walls; he shook them out of his mind. They interfered with his chances of locating Emdee, but it wasn't altogether bad, it would also cover the noise he made.

Nothing but the blackness of Mars and bright stars overhead. Three quarters of the way around the building and he saw some of the stars blotted out. He aimed the sparkler at the dim shape and let it cough once, politely.

He saw the faint glow where it hit, in the middle of the robot body. Instantly he closed his eyes, but the fierce light shone through. He could feel heat penetrating his hotsuit.

He counted the prescribed fifteen seconds and opened his eyes. Where minute particles of the bullet had rubbed against the wound, there was a glowing spot as big as his hand. The glow faded before he could get to the body.

He crept up to it, seized it by a leg, and dragged it behind a boulder. Shielding the light, he flashed it over the robot. It was one of the missing ones, scratched and battered from the time spent in the wasteland.

The eyes fluttered open and the bent arm fumbled grotesquely toward its back. "Tell Emdee —" the robot whispered, recognizing him. The sentence was never completed. This was one robot that Emdee couldn't count on.

Berini stared at it puzzledly. There had been no malice, no guilt in those eyes. Was it possible he and Lindon had misinterpreted?

On the back of the dead robot was a clue of course. A pack of some sort, but before he could examine it, a loud shout came from inside the assembly hall.

Berini jumped up. The robot he had intercepted had been the last to arrive. But apparently the other two had brought enough, and so Emdee hadn't waited, and he was now inside.

He ran for the door and broke in, sparkler in hand. No one noticed the interruption and no one turned around to look.

Berini put the sparkler away. There, at the far end of the room, against the imitation fireplace, was a familiar figure.

"It's been a long way," boomed

the great voice. "But I didn't forget you just because you were on Mars. I hitched a ride on the tail of a comet"

It was Emdee, and it was also someone far older.

"Now children," said Santa Claus, and he was perfect down to the red suit and white beard. He reached into the two packs on his back. Two packs, and there should have been three.

Again the sound that Berini had heard outside. A great murmur of childish awe and wonder.

Lindon's daughter came running up to Berini. "See what I got," she yelled, thrusting it into his hand and running back for more.

It was a doll, like none he had ever seen. But then, it was the first made by a robot to his own specifications. Working under difficult conditions, all the robot had had to guide him were the impressions that came through his eyes. This was the way a human looked to him

The doll was something like an angel.

Berini stood there, holding the plaything in his hand. At first the words of the song stuck in his throat, but they finally came out. "Peace on Mars, goodwill to men."

THE END

SUNBATHING IN SPACE

(See Front Cover)

When we looked around for an idea for a front cover for this issue of Universe, we were at a loss. But then artist Mel Hunter sent us a sketch which we liked. We asked him to do a finished cover. When it arrived, we took it down to Malcolm Smith, who was so delighted with it that he asked if he could add a few touches of his own. We agreed, and money began to flow like water. We spare no expense for our covers! So, once more we have a pair of artists collaborating. We think the result is pretty good. True, there is no story in the issue about it — but sunbathing is sunbathing, no matter where you do it, and the story is always the same — be careful you aren't where a Peeping Tom can see you!

Science says sunbathing in space is entirely possible. But they caution that you must screen out the ultra-violet radiations. In this case, our lovely bather has taken care to shield herself from great harm by ultra-violet proof glass. In addition it is leaded glass to avoid stray cosmic radiation. But alas, she has forgotten there are other travelers in space — for there he is, the inevitable peeper!

And aren't you all!

Nightsong

Full of resentment the song of the slave has rung down through the ages. For how else can a captive race register its defiance without actual violence? But song on Venus is *strange*.

By **W. T. POWERS**

Illustrated by Virgi Finlay

VENUS is a dark world, a steaming world of jungle and swamp; or, if you go up two miles, Venus is a dustbowl, a hot dry hell. The tops of the See-trees mat together to make a single half-mile-thick filter that sucks the oxygen and the moisture out of the air before it can escape higher, passing both back down to the ground where the water makes swamp and the oxygen bubbles slowly into the air to make life. Two miles up the hot sun makes shrieking hurricanes; near the ground there is only the cool of the evening breeze that passes in a never-ending wave around the planet, driven by the almost-imperceptible lowering of the See-tree mat overhead.

For five hellish years, earthmen had tried to make their homes in the great filter-mat of the See-trees, battling dust, living in bubbles built to withstand the tearing winds, dying in the sun and the drought, carried off by the wind, choked and trapped by the eager vines that had been thought to be the floor of this flat, strange world. Only after five long years, when Venus was going to be abandoned to its broiling sun and greedy plants, did a man named Cruette drive a tunnel down into the See-trees, lining it with copper screen that made the slow tendrils pause and then stop. Cruette had come back to the surface, laughing and wild, with the incredible news that the desert houses were tree-houses, and that far below lay a dim world soaked with the dear water and bathed in oxygen. How else, the afterthinkers then said, could anything live on a planet too close to its sun, where too much water was whirled high into the

saturated air by the wet winds, where the sun could blister living tissue in twenty minutes, where free oxygen was made by the radiations of the sun into lethal quantities of ozone? The colonists laughed knowingly at the explanations, and burrowed deep, and became swamp-dwellers.

Then there followed from Earth the Others, the men who tasted with drooling mouths the *kvand* weed that grew everywhere in the swamps, who sent their ships and their men to the swamps, marked off the face of the planet into zones and territories and protectorates, who bought the land with money and guns and began to make the men of Venus into mud-eaters, indenturing the new and terrorizing the old, forming great crews that raked up kvand with the jollystick, scraped it into barges with bull-buggies, hauled it back to the domes of Venus Town and Hammersburg and Croyden and Jennyville. Crews of sweating men, hopeless men who could look forward to nothing more than tuberculosis and foot-rot and a body burned out from too much oxygen — for the domes of Venus were not like those on Mars; they were made to keep the air out, not in, made to keep an over-abundant Nature from killing with excess blessings. But there were no domes in the fields.

Men cannot be made to accept their lot under conditions like these unless there is Hope — some shining goal, some vision of a future of peace and content and comfort, some task to be considered finished. Take away this Hope, and you have either men in deepest apathy, who do not have any will to work, or men who are angry, who have no desire but to destroy. Therefore, give them Hope — it does not matter if you have no intention of ever doing anything to fulfill it, or even if it is possible to do (although desperate men are sometimes very clever in making their illusions come true). Just make a Goal, and substitute for attainment a periodic expansion of the beautiful picture, a regular face-lifting of the imaginary landscape that will quell discontent and replace it with fantasies of ever-greater fulfillment.

Homer Jasro, who owned Venus Town and ten thousand square miles of swamp all around it, knew well about Goals and promises, and he knew their effect on the men who were indentured to him or who were blind enough to work for him. He was not a cruel man in the sense that he was not a sadist — he obtained no pleasure from the sight of bodies being carried in from the fields. On the other hand, his expression of concern and his internal disturbance was on the same order as that felt by a

farmer when he finds his tractor or his combine out of order. Within that limit, his concern was quite sincere. He was quite conscious that others would interpret it as sorrow and grief, and never hesitated to encourage the idea among his workers, the muckers in the fields. Not being able to cry, he contented himself with the measure, perhaps more effective, of looking as if he was trying not to.

Among his supervisors, however, he maintained no unnecessary illusions. His straw bosses and top muckers, who rode the fields in plastic-bubbled comfort or sat in cool, dry control-towers, were paid well enough that they had no need of vague future goals. Their working conditions were good, they had money enough for women and gambling and even saving; their hours were short — two men split the ten-hour workday in each position. They could quit when they liked, with recommendations, and would be received back on Earth with warmth as the men who brought manna to a starving world. The once-starving Earthmen, now fat and content, overlooked and disbelieved the stories of hardship on Venus as they filled their bellies half with Earth-grown food and half with the delectable, incredibly nourishing kvand. Indentured men who fled their jollysticks and stole rides home in chilly freighters found the atmosphere even chillier at home, as Terrans listened to their resentful tales of death and disillusionment, and reached for a telephone to call the immigration authorities. The memory of the Hungry Years was still too vivid for any unpleasant connotations about kvand to be brooked. The lines of men signing up for indenture were still to be seen around the offices of the trading companies.

As a matter of fact, Homer Jasro not only maintained no illusions with his overseers; he went rather far out of his way to see to it that the foremen had none of their own, so that they would not find themselves in the position of Harry Blake, a two-month veteran who stood before Jasro in Control-Tower Ten, one morning in early winter, his face red and the radiophone mike dangling from one numb hand.

"But the rumor wasn't true!" Blake protested. "All I did was pass the word!"

"Who gave you the authority to pass along top-level information?" Jasro rasped, his stocky body standing taut, his black eyes angry. "When I want a rumor squelched, I'll pass the word to you by personal messenger. What did you say, exactly, in your inspired little speech this morning?"

"All I said was that I was

sorry, fellows, the rumor about the dike having been started for the big park at Hammersburg wasn't true — it was still held up for lack of funds."

"Very straightforward, very frank. *Who told you that?*"

"Jesse Ehrenberg, the Super for this area."

"I know who Ehrenberg is. Who told you that anything he told you was to be broadcast to the muckers?"

"Why — I just assumed . . ."

"That's what I thought," Jasro said cuttingly. "You're not paid to assume things, Blake. You don't go around deciding on matters of propaganda. You're a section foreman, and your duties are quite simple — don't try to handle matters above your authority, or you'll be a section foreman for ten years, if you don't end up mucking. If you don't want to stick to your job and follow your orders — they're really not very complicated — you can quit any time you want to. The next time I hear of you interfering with the morale program, or in any other way overstepping your authority I'll assume that you want your passage earthside."

"Oh, no, sir, I like it here . . . you mean, there's no punishment?"

"A man who needs to be punished into a being a good foreman," Jasro said, a touch of expansiveness in his tone, "never gets hired for anything but hauling on jollysticks." He turned abruptly and left the tower. In a moment, Blake saw Jasro climb through the hatch of his private buggy, which shortly lurched into motion and began gliding off through the aisles of giant treeboles. In relief Blake sat down, and with a sudden thought reached for the loudspeaker-system microphone. He paused, then changed his mind and flipped the "talk" switch on the radiophone.

"Control Ten to Command One."

"Go ahead, Control Ten." Jasro's voice answered with startling immediacy.

"Sir, this is Blake. Shall I tell the men that the source denying that rumor was unreliable?"

There was a chuckle from the speaker. "Blake, you catch on fast. I need men with initiative, who will check with their superiors before carrying out their ideas. Yes, by all means do that. If you hadn't asked me that question before my buggy made Venus Town, you would have been the first section foreman I have ever fired. Keep your nose clean, and you can count on getting on the waiting-list for promotions within a month. You have a good record, Blake, one of the best of the new men, as a matter of fact. I'd hate to lose you over a little mis-

understanding."

"Thank you very much, sir!" Blake gushed. "Thank you *very* much. It won't happen again."

"Oh, Blake — I heard yesterday that they're not going to finish that dike at Hammersburg just yet — they've decided to enlarge the park and make it a whole town — the first open-air town on Venus!"

"But sir — that must mean . . ."

"It does, my boy. *Three white rats have lived their full active lifespan in Venus' atmosphere!* The drug works on rats, and it won't be long — only a few years — until it's extended to human beings."

"Shall . . . shall I tell the muckers?"

"Tell *one* of them. Just *one*."

"Sir . . ."

"Yes?"

"Is — is any of that true?"

"Why, Blake! You don't think I'd sink to starting *rumors*, do you?" There was a guffaw from the loudspeaker and the buggy's carrier went off the air.

Blake chuckled uncertainly, then threw back his head and forced himself to belly-laugh. When he got through convincing himself that it was funny, he sat back, a smile stretching his stiff lips, and began trying to think of which mucker would be the most likely to spread the rumor verbatim — or perhaps amplify on it a little. His stomach felt funny.

Lots of men in the supervisory squads seemed to develop ulcers.

Jasro paused at the gate of Venus Town that evening, listening over the roar of the trucks streaming out of the gates to pick up the men. From far to the east the sound came swiftly down the wind, a rhythmic beat and a half-song, half-chant, the words lost in the forests, but the feeling strongly there. He knew what it was, and did not know whether to be angered or pleased.

A long time ago, several years at least, a wandering entertainer had come to Venus (at least Jasro assumed that this was how it happened) and had started the men singing songs. The trading companies were looking for ways to keep the muckers less discontent, and so the man was allowed to travel from town to town, even given free transportation. He sang in bars, and he went out to the fields with the trucks in the evening and sang, and led singing. He taught the men how to slap out catchy rhythms on the handles of their jollysticks as they sang, and he gave them verse after verse after verse in the manner of the old-time New Orleans Blues of seventy-five years ago. The men loved it. They shouted the songs back and forth from the trucks, not all of the verses being printable. And when it had become a fad,

someone else had started a special kind of song going, and this song was different. The trading companies had kicked the man off Venus and he had died in space in an accident. But they knew it was someone else who had started the new words to the old, bawdy songs, because the new verses came even faster after the travelling singer died.

The rush of the nightsong grew and veered around Venus Town and faded to the west, following the night breeze and avoiding the Jasro trucks and overseers

For a time, after Jasro began hearing his own name in the nightsongs, he had tried to clamp down and shut the muckers up, but the men accosted by his squads were silent and innocent, while the nightsong rumbled all around in the darkness. After Jasro shot two men the nightsong faded for a few nights, and then came back again more strongly than ever, the men apparently having decided "What the hell". And Jasro, knowing that death was a meagre threat to his employees, tried to find a reason for accepting the situation. It was seldom that he came across a situation that he could not control, and when he did, he was forced to rationalize. But this time he was having his difficulties, because the men were shouting abuse of the trading companies in their songs, and calling down the evening winds what they were going to do with Venus. If you listened closely to the songs, it might seem that the men had fallen for the big illusions, for the rumors and hints of good fortune passed out by the careful companies, because they sang of their attachment for the dusky world, and their hope for the future, and for the changing of the face of the planet.

Old Man Jasro, bought a hunk
of ground,
Came up to Venus, bought a
great big hunk of ground.
But Jasro can't go where the
Freemen walk around.

Gonna build a house, with a
big back yard
When the dikes go up and the
ground is hard,
And Jasro's gonna build my
swimmin' pool.
You can fool a Freeman, but a
Freeman ain't no fool.

That last line left Homer Jasro poised on the dividing-line between amusement and alarm.

Sometimes the songs were nostalgic, sometimes maudlin or crude, but as they passed from field to field across the face of the planet they dropped the crudities and banalities, and came back the next night, or a week later, or a month, with the words changed and the sense of the words sharpened, with subtle

barbs in the place of sledge-hammers, with genuine feeling replacing overstrained reaching for effect. For instance. Jasro heard this one night, and curled his lip:

California's what I called my home,
California's what I called my home,
The traders made me leave my wife alone.

And the next night it came back like this, after following the twilight around the equator of Venus; sweeping in from Kellar's holdings far to the east.

I seen it rain in Cali-for-ni-aye,
It rains on Venus all the live-long day.
Don't mind the rain if the traders go away.

Mr. Kellar said, your wife can stay alone,
Mr. Kellar said, you can leave your wife alone,
But Mr. Kellar brought seven of his own.

And Jasro, knowing the truth, had to chuckle.

Tonight, however, he did not chuckle, for there was anger in the snatches of the nightsong that rose now and then above the growl of the trucks. A deeper note, a little less of the bantering, good-natured tone. Or if it was not really anger, it was something else that Jasro did not like to think about.

He climbed to the high tower built in the center of Venus town, up past the level where the top of the town's dome was sealed around the tower, into the circular control-room from which the whole vast, albeit simple, operation was conducted. The night operator was already on duty, an old employee who had worked for Jasro for fifteen years.

"You look riled, Homer," Skeeter Morrow said. "Been listening to the muckers tonight?"

Jasro turned a swivel-chair around and grunted into it. "Damn fools," he said.

" 'You can fool a Freeman . . .' " Skeeter said

"Bravado." Jasro snapped. "They're kidding themselves, and I say they're fools."

"Don't like seein' something bigger than you goin' on, eh, Homer?"

Jasro checked his hot reply, and merely looked narrowly at Skeeter. Skeeter smoothed his forehead and turned to the check-board for the incoming trucks. There was silence for a while, as Skeeter noted the lights with check-marks on the chart in his lap. Below, the wash of sound from the truck motors thrummed steadily, and patient lines of head-lights made their way to the

sealed and segregated bubbles outside the main town where the muckers were quartered.

"How many trucks do you think will be missing tonight, Skeeter?" Jasro asked, finally.

"Couple," Skeeter said. "We getting any new ones this week? The boys are getting a little overloaded."

"Let 'em!" Jasro said. "Those trucks didn't go down in the bogs. They're being stolen. Why do you work for me, Skeeter? You're the best man I have, and you hate my guts."

"I don't hate your guts, now, Homer." Skeeter said reprovingly. "I just want to stick around and see how a man like you takes defeat. I gave up hating you years ago."

"Then you'll stick around a good many more years. Venus is a big beautiful gold-mine, Skeeter, and it's a challenge. I'm rich enough now so I don't give much of a damn about money — money's just a way of adding up the score. Nothing ever licked me before, and nothing will, not until I'm too old to ride out in the fields and slap down a back-talking mucker with my own hands. This is my life, this is what my brain likes to do. They can't take that away from me."

"Peanuts," Skeeter said. "Those muckers got more up their sleeves than you ever dreamed of. Homer. You know what they think? They think *you* work for *them*."

Jasro grinned. "That's what they're supposed to think."

"More'n that." Skeeter shook off Jasro's complacent look. "They figger you'll do the organizing, and the big planning for 'em, and get things all set for the day when the muckers own their own land and start prettifyin' Venus. You buy all the stuff, they steal it and cart it away. Did you know they got a university set up?"

"*Where?*" The question was an explosion, and Jasro leaned forward, vibrating.

"No idea."

"Skeeter, you know a damned sight more than you tell. You know what the deserters are doing. You know where they're going, where they're planning their revolution."

"Now, Jasro, you're getting scared of your own shadow. Who says there'll be a revolution?"

"Why, damn it . . ." Jasro paused, consternation on his face.

Skeeter laughed loudly down at the trucks. "Venus is a great big place, Homer, and lots of things go on in places nobody's ever been. That is, no trader. But sometimes little rumors get started that ain't exactly so . . ."

Finally Jasro was able to see the humor of it. Caught on his own hook! He did not, however, laugh.

"All right, then what are they planning?"

"Couldn't say."

Exasperation reddened Jasro's face. "Damn it, Skeeter, you'll tell me what you know, or I'll burn it out of you!"

"Don't think you will, Homer. I remember Detroit."

So did Jasro. In Detroit he had actually carried out his threat of torture to the extent of one cigarette-burn before the man had started dictating figures, and afterward had spent two sweating, trembling hours with Skeeter trying to get drunk and failing completely. The man had been nearly insane with fear — and so had Jasro.

"You'll go too far, Skeeter," Jasro said at length, his face a shade pale "I'm harder when I'm closer to desperate."

"You desperate already, Homer?" Skeeter's tone was disappointed

"I'm going to find that university, Skeeter."

"O.K. Where shall we look first?"

Jasro clenched his fists at his sides, picturing in his mind the vastness of the universal forest, the millions of square miles of virgin territory. And the muckers — the deserters — had trucks that could go anywhere, trucks that he had to replace, that he had to *provide* for them. Without the trucks, he would be ruined. Without the men, he would be ruined. In the back of his mind lay the impossible notion that without the permission of the muckers, he would not be in business now. With an angry shake of his head he dispelled the dangerous thoughts.

"What's your part in it, Skeeter? I think I deserve an answer to that."

"None. Think I'd talk if I were working with 'em? I don't give anything away to anybody, Homer. I'm just lookin'." He added, after a pause, "In my own way, I'm an honest man, Homer."

"All right," Jasro sighed. "Don't know why I trust *you*, but I seem to. Need any money?"

"Nope. Thanks. Mebby one favor."

"Name it."

"You're too generous. When everything around Venus Town goes flop, let me know where you're going. The boys just might want to hire you in earnest."

Jasro stared for a long, unbelieving moment at Skeeter, and then the look was replaced by a more thoughtful expression. "I don't think you mean that as an insult. But I think I'll take it as one, Skeeter. You may not know how my mind works, but I do. I don't think a man can succeed once he agrees that there's any way out but success." His expression changed again. "Thank you, Skeeter." He stood abruptly, and strode to the circular stair-

case, and clattered out of sight.

Skeeter looked after him thoughtfully. "That's a big load you're carrying, Homer Jasro," he murmured. "Maybe the dropping of it will make a man of you yet." Homer Jasro's only friend turned back to his checklists.

A couple of the men sniggered as Danny Hoppey came dashing into the mess-hall ahead of the bunch from his truck.

"Hey, Pete, Jo-Jo," he shrilled. "Guess what? *It wasn't a rumor after all!*"

Pete and Jo-Jo, who had the misfortune of bunking respectively above and below Danny, looked at each other. *It's your turn,* Pete's look said, so the burly Jo-Jo swung around to face the breathless Danny. "What's d' cream, Danny?"

"There's going to be an open-air town!" Danny said, his eyes shining. "I got it from Blake in section Ten. They stopped the dike because they have to replan everything, it's going to be ten times as big as we thought!"

"And take ten times as long?" Jo-Jo sneered. "Where they gonna get the pumps? Where they gonna get the earth-moving machinery? Who's doing the work, how many men will it take?"

"Well, Jeez, Jo-Jo, *I* don't know! All I'm telling you is what I heard, they didn't tell me no more."

Pete said kindly, "Danny, you've got to check up on stories like that. Find out some of the details, or nobody's going to believe you. You've brought back a thousand wild tales, and you know nobody pays any attention to 'em unless you got some facts, some logic, to back it up. Now, that business about the white rats wasn't so bad, because you got some *facts* on *how they're doing it.* There's enough brains in amongst the muckers to be able to see good sense when they hear it, even if they ain't got much of an education."

"I'm sorry, Pete," Danny said, crestfallen. "I'll see if I can find out any more about it."

And all over the holdings of the trading companies, a thousand Dannys were saying sheepishly to secretly-grinning muckers, "I'm sorry . . . I'll see if I can find out any more about it."

Three thousand miles away, three men sat in a crude control-tower built from parts stolen off a hundred different control-towers of fifteen different makes. They looked down at a wet ooze of mud, and watched with disgust as the wet ooze got wetter. The dike around the mile-square area was still leaking somewhere under the mud, and the pumps weren't getting the water out so they could find the holes and

plug them. One of the men scribbled something on a sheet of waterproof paper, rolled up the sheet and shoved it into an aluminum capsule. "The trouble is," he complained as the messenger below caught the capsule and climbed into his stolen truck with it, "they screen out all the goddam engineers so we never get any."

The messenger stole at evening to the belts where the nightsong rose, and under cover of the slapping of the jollysticks, got close enough to pass the capsule on to a mucker in the outer reaches of the Jennyville holdings. The mucker screwed up his face in thought, and pummelled his brains and those of others, and the next night a new song was caught up in the twilight and swept to all of Venus:

Venus is a mud-hole in the sky,
Gonna pump ol' Venus, 'til
the ground runs dry,
But you can't pump mud, and
the traders don't know why.

A little devious, but certain muckers here and there, several tens of thousands of them, figured it out and the next time their Dannys brought good tidings of a mythical dike being built by a mythical trader, they piled him with sneering questions. The Danny went in chagrin back to his source, and his source bit his lip and went to *his* source; and sometimes it was answered by somebody up in the engineering buildings and sometimes it went all the way to the top, where a Jasro pursed his lips, put his keen and agile, if somewhat misguided, mind to work, and tossed off a plausible answer, which went back down through the channels to the muckers, to the hungry messenger, to the makeshift control-tower, where a hundred men listened, then went to rouse ten thousand more to tell them the new idea.

And a week later the ooze was oozing no more, and the holes were plugged, and the boles of the giant See-trees were dry for the first time in twenty thousand years.

And somebody asked, "How much water do the See-trees need to live?" and the messenger went off again, and a new song was heard, an urgent demand for information among the folk-songs of Venus.

The man Jasro came in from his fields smiling, and went over his books smiling. A good day, eighteen thousand tons of kvand, which would ship nearly four thousand dry at today's price of eighty dollars a ton. The mucker who had given him a raucous raspberry today would be treating his sore ribs and bruised face with tenderness tonight, and the

other muckers would grin.

The broad band of twilight slid quietly over Venus Town, and the men in the swamps stretched their tired backs and turned their faces to the rising night wind. Off the fat-tired bullbuggies climbed the weary drivers, standing beside their machines. The muckers leaned on their long broad jolly-sticks their heads low their eyes on the knee-deep sludge and the floating tendrils of kvand that they reaped all day. Evening and dark coming, and the men were no more use to their masters until the sunglow rose again.

And on the sweep of the first cool dark wind rose the voice of a man standing somewhere by his machine in the dark forests to the east

"Veeeeeeeeee — nus!" The tired eyes lifted, and there were the embers of fire in them.

"Veeenus . . . is a long way from home."

"Uh!" The grunt of assent rumbled through the darkening fields.

"Lean on your jollystick, Venus is a long way from home!"

Slap, slap, slap . . . the sound of hands thumping on the handles of the jollysticks.

"Heaven help you muckers, you'll die in a Venus dome!" slap slap.

Slap SLAP slap-a-slap slap SLAP slap-a-slap ! ! !

"Ve*NUS!*"

"*VE*nus!" fifty voices echoed slap SLAP slap-a-slap.

"Venus water in your blood!" they wailed.

And the SLAP went rolling through the trees toward the west, SLAP!

"Venus water!" More voices

"In your blood!" and for miles came the echo of the SLAP.

"My daddy died last week, in a Venus-water flood!"

The rumble of the distant *slap* underlined the near SLAP.

"I work for Mr. Jasro, muckin' in his fields all day."

Slap BOOM as the drivers thumped their big machines.

"Work for Mr. Jasro, workin' in his fields all day!"

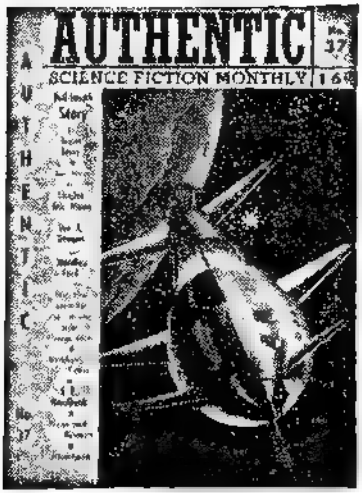
Slap BOOM slap-a-slap, slap SLAP slap-a-slap . . .

"Jasro's finished, you can take the dead men away!"

"Veeeeeenus . . ."

As the twilight swept onward toward the west, the sound of the nightsong followed it, the Freemen of Venus waiting for the big trucks to pick them up, calling to each other along the wind, weaving the rhythm and the chant of the nightsong that bound them together, the nightsong that was always where twilight dimmed the vast forests, and never died from the face of Venus.

The Freemen waited.



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ON MARS WE TROD

By Eando Binder

Some people say Alexander Graham Bell wasn't really the inventor of the telephone. Here is a story of the first man to reach Mars — and who, like Bell's unknown rival, didn't get the credit — until he came back from the dead!

Illustrated by Lawrence

MIRACULOUSLY, the victim was alive! Excited, Mark Allison gave him a stiff shot, followed by hot soup. At last the man stopped shivering and a pink glow drove away the deadly blue of his skin.

The crisis was over. Death withdrew.

"Hello," said Allison, feeling foolish at the trite word, but somebody had to say something first. "Feel all right? Wonder if you knew you were floating in space, frozen? Sometimes it happens too quickly — they just black out. Was your ship wrecked? Blasted open by a meteor? You were thrown clear probably. No chance to put on a space suit. But luckily, you got space-frozen instead of dying. It happens often enough. And lucky, too, I spotted you here, on the Mars-Earth run. Who are you, friend?"

But the reporter only got a puzzled stare in return, from the revived man. Why didn't he understand plain Sol? It was the universal language of the Solar System in 2273, formerly the English-American language of Earth.

But the man only shook his head, and gibbered back in queer accents that baffled Allison.

Allison squinted thoughtfully, then, at the torn clothing he wore. Now he noticed how *odd* they were. Not a special style of any planet, but a style that reached across another dimension — time!

"Those old-time movies of ancient days," Allison breathed. "The people wore outfits like yours. Pilots anyway. You're from the *past*, my friend. You've been

space-frozen for maybe *centuries!* Great Orion!"

But then, there was no strict limit to how long a man might stay unharmed in the deep freeze of space. Once frozen properly, he was perhaps good forever, or at least a thousand years. He wouldn't "spoil," anymore than food would spoil in any deep freeze.

Listening intently, Allison began to understand the man speaking back. After all, it was just an archaic form of modern 23rd century Sol-English. And by slowing down his own staccato accent into a drawl, Allison made himself understood by the other. They spoke the same language really, and only had to bridge the gulf of several centuries of change between their two "dialects." After that, it went smoothly.

"The year 2273?" said the survivor finally, getting that clear. "It's that far in the future — my future, that is? I'm from 1970!"

Allison whistled. This broke all records. Some space frozen men had been found and revived as late as 87 years after their accident. But no recorded case was on file of a survivor of 303 years. He was really *ancient!*

The man looked sad now, as if looking back down the dim corridor of time to the lost age which he could never again see. He was suddenly forlorn, pathetic, a lost soul.

But Allison was too excited for pity, at the next thought he had.

"Let's see — space travel didn't *begin* until 1968. Then you must be among the early *pioneers* of space. Maybe your name is even *famous* in interplanetary history, as one of those renowned space trail blazers."

The man looked startled. "You mean I might be part of *history* now? My name known and recorded?"

"Why not?" Allison nodded. "Frobisher — Hackinweil — Kobawska — Bergdorf — Wentworth. Are you any of those?"

The man from 1970 shook his head. "John Henry Gregg."

Allison filed through his memory. It was all past history, those early pioneering days of space. Every kid learned it all by heart in school these days, about those famous, thrilling maiden flights to the Moon, Venus, Mars and all the other planets.

Allison frowned in disappointment, seeing a headline slipping from his grasp. "John Henry Gregg? Sorry, it's not familiar."

The other's face fell too. But then he shrugged. "Naturally not, come to think of it. I *failed* in my flight. Never got back to Earth. History would only remember the *successful* space flyers. So I'm unknown."

"That's it of course," Allison agreed. "There were dozens of poor devils like you who bravely

set out to conquer space and set foot on a new world — and never made it. Martyrs. But of course all the glory goes to the guy who makes it."

John Henry Gregg of 1970 nodded. But it was a nodding droop of fatigue. He almost slumped to the floor before Allison caught him and bundled him in the bunk.

For a moment Allison feared he might be passing into eternal sleep, unable to survive his 300-year ordeal in frozen space. But a grin came to his lips at an unmistakable sound.

"Snoring," Allison muttered. "Poor guy is just dead tired. He'll be all right after a long sleep."

Allison plotted headlines before he dozed off himself. He would come back to Earth with something far better than the Flower Show on Mars.

In fact, something quite sensational. . . .

The next morning, Earth time, Gregg looked refreshed at breakfast, a vigorous young stalwart, obviously one of the finest physical specimens of the 20th century. But despite his powerful build and rugged face, he had strangely soft brown eyes that brooded, tabbing the sensitive mind behind. He could be the man of action — or the thinker too.

Allison looked him over with a preparatory twinkle in his eye. "You don't look a bit your age, friend — 303 years."

"Don't feel a day over 200 myself," Gregg quipped back. "Actually, I'm 30. Or I was, back in 1970."

Allison resumed where they had left off. "So you tried for some planet and cracked up in space in 1970. Which planet?"

Gregg answered bleakly.

"Mars or bust. Do or die. I was going to be famous as the first man to step foot on Mars. A Columbus of Space — that sort of thing. Dozens of us in those exciting days were filled with the wild spirit of adventure. Ships had reached the Moon and returned, in 1968, opening up space. When Kobawska reached Venus a year later, the world went into a frenzy. Then everybody tried for Mars. That was the next big goal. Mars or bust —"

His voice went down

"For me it was bust. I saw it coming at my ship, but too late — the meteor. All went black until I woke up here in your ship. That parade down Fifth Avenue — the cheering millions — the big headlines with my name — all that was wiped out in one crashing moment."

Allison pitied him. He had risked all for fame, even his life. His life had been miraculously restored to him, three centuries later, by a quirk of fate. But now what was he, here in 2273? Just

one of those failures of space pioneering. Unknown and unsung.

How many daring mariners had sailed toward America, before Columbus — and never been heard of again?

"You wouldn't know this," Allison told him gently, "but it was James Wentworth who first reached Mars, in 1971, a year after you tried and cracked up. His name of course ranks today with the greats of history's explorers and discoverers, both terrestrial and interplanetary. We have a Wentworth Day, like Columbus Day, on August 15, celebrating the day that a man first trod the red sands of Mars. Too bad you didn't beat him to it, Gregg."

"But I did," Gregg returned quietly.

Mark Allison twisted a finger in his ear. "Funny, I thought I heard you say you did beat him to Mars."

"I did," Gregg repeated.

"You're confused, friend," Allison said impatiently. "A while ago you told me you cracked up in space."

"On the *return* trip from Mars," nodded Gregg. "Not on the way there."

Allison sat down. All his muscles had turned to rubber. He choked out words. "Now look, friend. I've got a heart murmur and not-so-steady nerves. I'm prone to nervous breakdowns. Please — *please* don't kid around with me. Now let's start all over. Answer me slowly and carefully. You got in your spaceship, right? Just answer yes or no."

"Yes."

"You headed for Mars?"

"Yes."

"You did *not* hit that meteor on the way *to* Mars?"

"No."

Allison wetted his lips. "You hit said meteor on the *return* trip from Mars to Earth?"

"Yes."

Allison looked like he was praying now. "Now — the jackpot question — did you just *circle* Mars without landing?"

"No."

Allison could hardly spill the words out fast enough then. "You landed? You set your foot" — he stopped and pointed at Gregg's right foot, dramatically — "*that very foot* down on Martian soil? The first human foot to ever do it?"

"No."

Allison jerked as if stabbed. "But — but —?"

"It was my *left* foot," Gregg returned seriously. "I remember it all so clearly — you know, etched on my memory. . . ."

Allison took up breathing again. "Good heavens, man," he bleated. "Think of my nerves. All right, you set your *left* foot down on Mars first. And in 1970? One year *before* James Wentworth?"

"Yes."

There was dead silence in the spacejet for a long moment, as the two men stared at each other. Gregg got uncomfortable under the fixed eyes of Allison, for they shone now with awe — infinite awe.

Then Allison jumped up to take a stiff slug of Medicinal Purposes from the medical kit. "I needed that," he said, straightening up but still trembling all over. "When I explode this story on Earth, it'll be like a thousand atom bombs going off at once. The biggest headline of a century — UNKNOWN SPACE PIONEER BEAT WENTWORTH TO MARS! And then I give 'em the second barrel — ALIVE TODAY! HEAR HIS STORY IN PERSON!"

Allison was babbling. Gregg sat paralyzed.

"Don't you see, man? That puts you in the Hall of Fame of Interplanetary History. The first man — the *true* first man — to reach Mars!"

Gregg struggled out of his shock. "I'll — I'll become famous for that — *today?*"

"Famous?" Allison spat out the word as if it were obsolete or totally inadequate. "They'll take you on parade to Mars and Venus and Ganymede and Titan and all the rest. Nine planets and 33 moons, all inhabited today. You'll be shown off to them all, not less than a billion people by the time they finish the tour of the famous space hero who first set foot — his *left* foot — on Mars, back in 1970."

Gregg looked a bit frightened now. "I — can't we just settle for one parade down Fifth Avenue? Nine planets . . . a billion people. . . !"

Allison gripped his shoulder.

"Steady, man. Keep your nerve. Yes, it'll be an ordeal, all right. Steel yourself for it. You can't get out of it. You can't disappoint millions upon millions of people who will idolize you, worship you, cheer you day and night. Good thing you slept 303 years. You won't get much sleep from now on."

Gregg was already wilting, wiping his moist face. "I almost wish —" He stopped.

"You almost wish the meteor had finished you off?" grinned Allison. He sobered. "I'm sorry, Gregg. I know your type. You wanted a little acclaim of course, but not oceans of it. It's going to be tough on you, friend, tough. But sheer up, it'll be over in a year or so. After it all simmers down, you can relax and start living your own life again."

"Live my own life again," echoed Gregg, more happily. "I guess I'll just have to grit my way through it till that day comes. Then I can —"

His face clouded. "Then I can

— *what?* What can I do in this far future — my — future — displaced from my times? I'll probably be like a hillbilly here in your advanced times. Allison — can you understand? *That* scares me too!"

Allison nodded in sympathy. "I know. It won't be easy, adjusting to our modern age."

Broodingly, Gregg pursued the topic. "To be quite practical, how can I earn my living here in 2273? I was just an ordinary rocket pilot of my time. You must have millions today, far better trained. How will I *compete* in your economic system? Earn my daily bread? Make money?"

Allison stared. "But Gregg, don't you remember —?" He smote his own forehead. "Stupid me! How could you remember or even *know?* But you don't have to worry about money, Gregg. You'll be one of the *richest* men alive today."

Gregg's face reflected only blank incomprehension, as if Allison had suddenly switched to ancient Sanskrit.

Allison sat down, lit a cigarette, and explained slowly, taking pleasure in the surprise coming up for his guest.

"Here's the pitch. Back in 1971, a year after you were spilled into space and knew no more, the United Nations assembly of Earth met and put through a very vitally needed set of laws, governing the exploration and settlement of space worlds. Briefly, they *internationalized* all planets, which was smart, avoiding endless bickering and possible war. But then, they also decided it was only fitting and proper that the great men who first opened up space — regardless of nationality — should be rewarded for their daring. So in 1972 — again after you vanished in space — the *Planetary Prizes* were set up."

Gregg waited, wonderingly.

Allison finished. "According to the provisions, each man who *first* set foot on any new world was granted 1–100 of one percent of *all mineral rights* on said world, for his lifetime!"

Gregg gasped.

"Right," Allison agreed, "it takes your breath away. It sounds like a small percentage off hand, but think how *big* each world is. Frobisher, the first man to reach the Moon, was a millionaire in five years. The Moon was mined for silver, uranium, and endless quantities of copper. On Venus, a bonanza of diamonds was found, putting the Kimberley Mines to shame. Kobawska, the first man to plant a flag on Venus, died a very *very* rich man."

Allison paused, giving Gregg time for the next shock.

"The riches of Mars surpassed them all, when the dry sea-bottoms were found practically paved with gold."

Gregg rode out the shock. "Then James Wentworth got all that wealth —"

Allison cut in. "Wentworth died in 1972, one year after he reached Mars. He died — of all things — from a fall in his bathtub. He never collected a penny, since mining operations didn't start on Mars for years. His heirs would have inherited his Planetary Prize — only he had no heirs. But most important of all, he is disqualified anyway, being the *second* man to reach Mars."

Like a prosecutor pounding home his case, Allison pointed a finger at Gregg.

"*You* were the first man."

Gregg got his tongue working with an effort. "You mean, I — I —?"

"Collect?" Allison said. "Certainly. You'll be established now as the true winner of that unawarded Planetary Prize for reaching Mars first." He mumbled some figures. "Let's see . . . last I heard . . . 200 billion Soldollars per year . . . hmmm . . . fifty years . . . uh . . . well, in round figures, you get a neat little pile of a *billion*. You'll be a billionaire, friend."

"I don't believe it," snapped Gregg, turning to stare out into space through the port. "This is all a dream. A crazy, cockeyed dream. I'm still floating in space . . . frozen . . . my mind wandering. It must be that." He whirled. "Or else you're making this all up, Allison. Playing some kind of cruel joke on me, laughing up your sleeve."

"Joke?" grunted the reporter. "Try and laugh it off when they dump the first million in your lap and ask where to unload the other carloads waiting outside. . . ."

Allison's voice stopped dead. "Wait! I forgot something. Great Orion! What *proof* have you that you reached Mars? Now hold on — no offense. Sure, *I* believe you. You've proved it to me by your simple, sincere way of telling it. But the Planetary Prize Committee — they won't hand over a billion dollars on your *word*. They'll want *proof*. Have you any?"

Gregg shrugged. "I don't know. If it's still here —" He was fishing in the pocket of his torn leather jacket. "Yes, here. I stuck it in my pocket when I was on Mars."

He held out a stone of peculiar gold-red hue.

Allison took it, turned it over in his hand, then split the air with a war-whoop.

"A Martian *sea stone* — unmistakable — from the ancient dry sea bottoms. That stone is your proof, friend, beyond a shadow of a doubt. It's worth a billion to you!"

Gregg himself had a doubt. "But why will they take my word about the *year?* I have no proof

about that, that it was 1970."

Allison waved. "Don't worry about that minor detail, friend. You see, they did keep records in those days of all flyers lost in space. The names are unknown to the glare of fame, but they're down in black-and-white. Somewhere will be a record of one John Henry Gregg who was lost in space in 1970, Rest in Peace. Good joke on them, eh? But once more — are *you* sure of the year? Was it 1970?"

Gregg nodded firmly. "It was just a month after my 30th birthday. A person doesn't get mixed up about those things."

"No," agreed Allison. "A full year! You reached Mars a whole year ahead of James Wentworth! You're in, friend. In for the parades, and blazing fame, and that billion bucks! We'll land on earth in ten hours. Better get some sleep now. You'll need it."

On Earth, at Idlewild Spaceport, the spacejet landed.

Mark Allison swung open the hatch, letting a draft of cool fresh air in.

John Henry Gregg took a deep breath — his first of Earth air in 303 years — half in delight, half wincingly.

"I suppose there's a crowd waiting already," he gritted.

"I radioed ahead," nodded Allison. "Nothing for you to do now but face it, friend."

Gregg squared his shoulders' marched out.

He stared around, dazed. "The crowd!" he gasped.

Allison grinned tightly.

Gregg gasped again. "The crowd — where *is* the crowd?"

"What crowd?" asked Allison, quietly.

Gregg spluttered. "Why — why those cheering millions you promised. You said millions would idolize me, cheer me, parade me all over town. "But — there's *nobody* here!"

"You sound pretty *disappointed*, friend," said Allison. "In fact, you sound indignant. But I'm indignant too, Gregg — or should I say enraged? — at your *scheme!*"

"Scheme?" stammered Gregg. "Wh-what are you babbling about? Are you mad?"

"Yes, very mad," snapped Allison, his voice rising in intense bitterness. "Boiling is the word. You hooked me, roped me in like a baby, building me up to the biggest newspaper scoop of all time, only to have it fall with a dull thud at my feet. All I've got now is a story of a cunning hoax An attempted swindle, of the Planetary Prize for Mars. But that money isn't for you, friend. Nor the fame and honor and glory of a space pioneer. Nor the cheering crowds. There's no crowd here, only two men coming toward us — in uniform. *They're* your welcoming committee."

"Police?" Gregg stood paralized.

"You won't tell the true story so I will," Allison ground out. "Maybe I won't have all the facts quite straight but it'll be close enough. You simply jumped into space deliberately, a few days or weeks ago — not 303 years ago. Yes, you took a chance, a risk that you would *die*. But young and strong, you knew you had a 50–50 chance to be space-frozen *alive*. And you jumped out near the main Mars-Earth space lane, with a thousand ships passing a day. You took the calculated risk — and won. I picked you up and revived you."

Gregg was mouthing protests, but Allison charged on loudly.

"The other details were simple — buying a torn old 20th-century pilot suit — practicing the old-English accent of 1970 — schooling yourself to 'forget' all space history past that time. Elementary, too, carefully picking up a Martian sea-stone and stuffing it in your jacket. And cleverest of all, looking up old records and finding that one John Henry Gregg *did* lose himself in space in 1970, an unsung hero."

Allison went on with scornful admiration.

"Yes, you played the part to perfection — that of a man born 303 and more years ago, destined to be a space hero. And how did you hide that gleam of *greed* in your eyes, when I told of the Planetary Prizes? Because of course that was your whole scheme — to claim the billion dollars for first reaching Mars."

The two uniformed men held Gregg by the arms now, as he struggled violently.

"It was all perfect, I assure you," Allison rasped. "You had me completely fooled — *completely!*"

As the handcuffs snapped shut, the wild man shouted madly.

"But then what tripped me up? If I fooled you, how could I *fail* What tripped me? Tell me — I've *got* to know!"

The smile on Allison's face was almost pitying.

"One little thing betrayed you, Gregg — or whatever your real name is when the police drag it out of you. No, not a little thing — a big *glaring* thing. Sometimes the *obvious* escapes a person. You plugged all the little holes, but you left one hole big enough for an elephant to march through."

"What?" shrieked the man whose alias was Gregg. "*What* was my mistake?" And he no longer had a 20th century accent.

Allison looked in the sky toward space, with half dreamy eyes.

"The stars and planets wheel in their eternal orbits, eon after eon, never disobeying set laws — never. Think once, you poor fool. Earth's year is 12 months. The

year of Mars is almost 23 months, almost double. Thus the two planets only come close together, in conjunction, once every *two* years. Wentworth reached Mars in 1971, when it was at its closest to earth, only 36 million miles off. You said you beat him by one year — in 1970."

The prisoner staggered, in dawning comprehension.

"Sure," said Allison. "By the immutable laws of space, Mars in 1970 was in *opposition* with Earth!"

"1969 I should have said!" screamed the man who called himself Gregg, as they dragged him off. "Why didn't I say 1969?"

"That's what I was wondering," mused Allison, "while you slept. Wondering why any man in his right mind would make a mad dash for Mars, in 1970, when it was way around on the other side of the sun, at its *furthest* distance from earth of 235 million miles! It didn't make sense."

He grinned.

"No, it didn't make *cents* — for you."

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